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The ascent out of inhumanity

By Geoffrey Hosking

VASILII AKSYONOV:
Ozhog (The Scorch Mark).
442pp.
Ostrov Krym (The Island of Crimea)
324pp.
Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis.

In the West, we are used by now to everyone settling accounts with the illusions of the 1960s, generated by the heady mixture of growing affluence and political idealism. What we may not realize is that the Soviet Union also had its optimistic Sixties generation, children of Stalin's worst years, who came to maturity around the time of the old tyrant's death and experienced young adulthood when democratization, scientific progress and the abjuration of terror seemed to be in the air.

The leading prose writer of this generation was Vasilii Aksyonov. Twenty years ago every journal containing something of his was sold out on the day of publication. His stories were full of the imagery of cars, sport, pop music and space exploration. His heroes dressed in jeans and sneakers, danced rock-and-roll, read Sartre and Salinger, and spoke a smart, westernized *argot*. Young people lapped all this up, but of course literary conservatives regarded it with the gravest suspicion, as a profanation of the special mission of the Soviet Union and a surrender to the false charms of bourgeois culture. However, for a number of years, the "youth prose" writers like Aksyonov were able to fend them off, and to go on publishing. For one thing, the early 1960s were a period of relative freedom in literature, and young talent was being actively sought and cultivated. (How different from today: at the Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union held in July this year, the proportion of delegates under forty years of age was just 3 per cent.) Even more important, for all their surface irreverence, the young people whom Aksyonov and his associates portrayed were not deeply disaffected from Soviet society: their personal revolt was directed to the new and creative, and it usually ended with rededication to the building of socialism, conceived in the new post-Stalin spirit – a socialism replete with beat music, sputniks, transistor radios and very possibly (since "convergence" was also in the air) even Coca-Cola.

From the mid-1960s onwards, this vision began to fade. The crushing of the "Prague spring" in 1968 brutally symbolized its passing, but in fact the process was a gradual one. The literary bureaucrats became less and less inclined to publish Aksyonov and his brethren. One reason for this – though not the only one – was that "youth prose" itself had developed: notes of individual revolt, experimentation and subjectivity were becoming stronger, the ultimate rededication to socialism fainter. In Aksyonov's own work, the hoped for goal of a warm and brotherly society took on more stylized and metaphorical forms. Rather than make any explicit political statements (in which by then he certainly did not believe) he focused his stories round subjective, often unexpected images of hope and promise: a star-spangled sky seen in the shaft of a tall building (in *Zvezdnyi bilet* [*Ticket to the Stars*], 1961), a shipload of oranges delivered at a Far Eastern port (in *Apel'siny iz Marokko* [*Oranges from Morocco*], 1963), or a lorry load of empty barrel casings (in *Zatovarennaya bochkotara* [*Excess Barrel Casings*], 1968). These images, subjective, indeed arbitrary in appearance, changed and grew with almost baroque exuberance, while the fantasies of Aksyonov's individual characters crystallized around them, till they became beacons in the common quest for light, love and beauty. Concordant with this many-faceted subjectivity, Aksyonov began to experiment with his narrative viewpoint, recounting his tales through the eyes of more than one character, flashing backwards and forwards in time, allowing dream and fantasy to merge with reality, and so on. In the process he rediscovered some of the rich experimental tradition of Russian prose of the 1910s and 1920s (buried under the rubble of Socialist Realism, but just being partly republished for the first time): Bely, Zamyatin, Babel', Pil'nyak, Zoshchenko.

Less and less of all this, however, was actually getting published. By the early 1970s, apart from the occasional short story and a pot-boiler on the revolutionary movement, nothing was appearing at all. An uninformed, or even moderately informed, reader might have been forgiven for assuming that Aksyonov had given up writing altogether.

In fact, of course, nothing of the kind had happened. He was actually writing a great deal. More than that, he was reflecting on what was going on around him, and refashioning his new techniques as a tool for describing it. We now have the results before us. *Ozhog*, written between 1969 and 1975, is nothing less than the testimony of Aksyonov and his generation, a panorama of their hopes, their illusions and disillusions, and of the spiritual reappraisal which political and aesthetic reaction forced upon them.

The great paradox of the bright and optimistic "youth" generation was that their childhoods coincided with the darkest era of Stalin's Russia. Aksyonov's father died in the Gulag Archipelago, and his mother, Evgeniya Ginsburg, spent no less than eighteen years in its darkest regions (her testimony, *Into the Whirlwind* and *Within the Whirlwind*, is a classic account which will already be familiar to many Western readers). Young Vasilii himself was brought up in Magadan, the port town where loads of prisoners were daily discharged from the slave ships that had brought them from the "mainland" of Soviet Russia. Yet one would guess none of this from reading Aksyonov's early work. The barbed wire of Kolyma is as remote to his long-haired youngsters as it was to Augie March or Lucky Jim.

Why did he choose to ignore his childhood in this way? Was it fear of the censorship which moved him to repress memories of Magadan? (But Solzhenitsyn published *Ivan Denisovich* in the Soviet Union just when Aksyonov was at the height of his popularity.) Or was it rather that he sincerely believed and hoped that the Stalin terror had now been securely consigned to the past by the Party and could not be revived, so that it was both proper and life-affirming to turn one's attention to the promise of the future? Or did he simply deliberately repress unpleasant memories?

Whatever may be the truth, the invasion of Czechoslovakia made it finally clear that the past was not dead, that it was very much alive, not only in memory, but also in political reality. For that reason, perhaps, one of the principal themes of *Ozhog* is the rediscovery of the cruel father. The novel imaginatively re-creates a generation's attempt to come to terms with this father figure (whom in their youth they had tried to see as benevolent), and their search for a new creative starting point. The narrator is a collective personality, at one and the same time writer, sculptor, jazz musician, surgeon and scholar: five individuals sharing the same patronymic in token of their common paternity. The experiences of the five constantly interwine and, even more important, they share the same childhood, that of an orphaned Jewish boy in post-war Magadan. This boy, Tolya von Shteinbok, who sees his mother arrested and his best friend savagely beaten up by the security police, is, as it were, the collective begetter of the 1960s "youth" movement. The novel follows, spiritually rather than chronologically, the evolution of his generation.

The first of its three parts shows youth culture during the 1970s having its final drunken fling, the hope and warmth degenerating into tawdry promiscuity and betrayal. This part is much too long for the overall balance of the novel, a sign perhaps of the regret with which the author parts from his youthful illusions and allows the return of the repressed. At separate moments in the crowded texture the five Apollinar'eviches dimly recognize in a cloakroom attendant, a chance passer-by or a hospital orderly the state security captain who had beaten up their friend so many years before. This shadow from the past gradually takes shape as Captain Cheptsov, who then plays a key role in the second, retrospective, section of the novel, situated in childhood Magadan. In this Inferno, however, there are not only evil spirits, but also potential figures of grace: the religious stepfather, who captures Tolya's imagination by the calm steadiness of his faith, and the young girl, Alice, the helpless female figure whom Tolya tries to shield from the cruelty of the camp guards. In the third part, back in the 1970s, the five Apollinar'eviches try to find their way forward in a world where these harbingers of both damnation and redemption now play a full part.

This third part, in contrast to the first, is underdeveloped, and its insights are hesitant and contradictory. Aksyonov is entering new territory here, and his step is uncertain. Probably, like Tolya and his co-personae, he is tempted by the desire to lapse back into the old familiar roles of the "normal Zhdanovite world", to which they have all been brought up. After all, their youthful beliefs were ostensibly guaranteed by the dedication of the father-Party to technological progress and the building of a better society. The desire *not* to recognize the cruel father is very strong. Young Tolya at school in Magadan desperately wants to be like any other schoolboy, to excel at sport and win his colleagues' admiration – in effect to be "a middle-rank slave, like everyone else". His mother's arrest is distressing to him because it threatens to put him in a special category, to demote him to the status of "slave of the lowest category". In the company of his stepfather, however, even in this nadir, he discovers a whiff of freedom, of risk, of alienation from this world", which is a source of spiritual release. He is torn between the two worlds. The good stepfather and Captain Cheptsov struggle for the soul of his generation.

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also a measure of subjective assent, as Aksyonov admits in one of his most haunting insights. "Even as we giggled over Zoshchenko's little monkey and wrote out Akhmatova's verses for our girls, even then deep down – yes, deep down – we were convinced of the normality of Zhdanov's world and of the abnormality, sickliness and shamefulness of Zoshchenko's." Small wonder, then, that as the clock began to turn back in the mid-Sixties, many literary figures resorted to the compromises and even betrayals which Aksyonov portrays in the first part of *Ozhog*.

Yet, even as their sway resumes, the evil fathers themselves go through a strange evolution. Captain Cheptsov, now retired, looks after a bed-ridden, helpless woman whom he had reduced to a mental wreck in the days of his power, and then subsequently married. He becomes the lover of his stepdaughter (herself apparently a reincarnation of Tolya's Alice) and shields her dissemination of appeals on behalf of Sakharov and the human rights movement. He goes through a process of remorse, despair and self-injury to be saved through the application of a life-giving elixir invented by the medical Apollinar'evich. He even makes his final appearance as a Chinese philosopher proclaiming a God of love.

These transmogrifications appear somewhat arbitrary – indeed, to be honest, I think they are – but they point towards a fundamental feature of *Ozhog*, the dissolution of opposites in a warm dialectical bath of human intimacy. Intimacy of all kinds, good and bad. The intimacy of a society where the great majority of the population live cheek by jowl in communal apartments, and where every tenth citizen is reporting to the authorities on the other nine. The intimacy also of sexual promiscuity: readers of Aksyonov's earlier novels will be struck by the varied and vivid sexual imagery which he now employs. This is partly the liberation of western publication, of course, but it is wholly justified by his vision of the world. The relation of the informer to his "object", for example, is parodied in a verse improvisation which might be called *The Informer's Rhapsody*:

> When he entered the room, everything within me trembled.
> Oh, my idol, my love, my homely Russian sweetheart!
> Were I a woman, I would cleave inseparable to your loins!
> You bitches, you spies in skirts, away from my noble eagle!
> Why, oh why are the *organs* so inactive?

Yet this intimacy of the damned bears the potentiality of something better. When Cheptsov becomes his stepdaughter's lover, he takes the decision *not* to denounce her human-rights activities to the authorities, and in this way he begins his strange ascent out of inhumanity. Alice in her various reincarnations is reunited with her various lovers in relationships of both passion and compassion. Aksyonov's pervasive sexual imagery is in fact part of the repertoire by which he imparts to all human relationships a touch of both the diabolic and the angelic.

He is clearly also drawn by the field of religious experience, both as a source of imagery and of ultimate hope. Here, however, he is out of his depth. Like so many contemporary Soviet (or newly ex-Soviet) writers, he has a strong feeling of the need for religious belief, but, cut off by two generations of atheist upbringing from any regular ecclesiastical tradition, can only grope blindly around in the new territory thus opened up. It is no accident that *Ozhog* ends with the entire traffic of Moscow halting in the streets in the expectation of a great revelation – whose contents, however, are not disclosed to us.

Ozhog is a rich and many-sided work, the product of self-examination as well as literary experimentation. It exhibits its author's weaknesses as well as his strengths, but as a whole it is the creation of a powerful literary imagination seeking a way forwards in the spiritual maelstrom of 1970s Moscow.

By comparison, *Ostrov Krym*, though a later work, is much less problematic. It is a fable, one might almost say an "entertainment". The core of its fantasy is indicated already in the title: the Crimea is no longer a peninsula but an island, cut off from the Russian mainland and miraculously saved by the Whites in 1920. This is not quite such an unlikely proposition as might be imagined, since in fact the Whites, even on the actually existing peninsula, did as a matter of historical fact hang on in 1920 for a year longer than anywhere else in Russia, and indeed set up an embryonic parliamentary democracy, potentially very different from the military dictatorships they had installed elsewhere. At any rate, in Aksyonov's version the Crimea has become a fully-fledged Westernized society, with the full range of political parties (including the fanatic and terrorist fringes), a free press, advertising, motorways, and the latest in fashion and pop music.

This conceit enables Aksyonov to indulge his favourite fantasy, a setting which is wholly Russian yet also cosmopolitan. The glossy consumerism of the West coalesces with the slummy matinees of Moscow. Aksyonov, of course, loves both. So does his hero, Andrei Luchnikov, who conjures from the mixture the idea of a Common Fate, the reunion of the Crimea with Soviet Russia, not, as the Whites once dreamed, by military reconquest, but on the contrary by requesting incorporation as the sixteenth Soviet republic. He puts his influential newspaper at the service of the Idea and initiates a political campaign to get it realized.

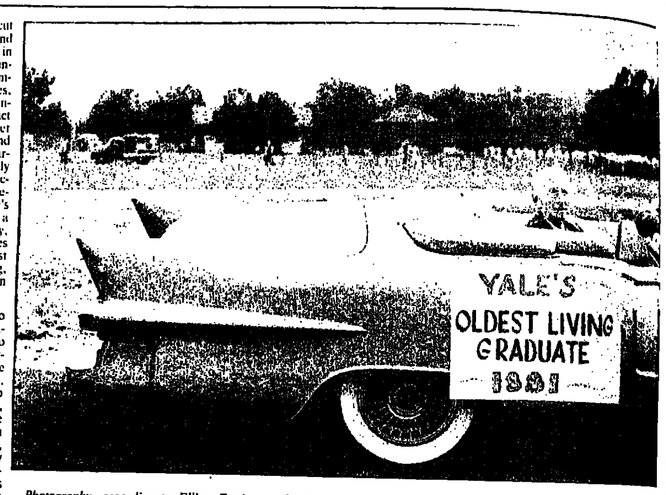
Luchnikov embodies a number of types from the present and recent past of both Russia and the West. He is in part the young Russian expatriate who reacts against the anti-Sovietism of his parents and asserts his Russian identity by seeking reabsorption in the fatherland (there were quite a number of them during and after the Second World War, and they finished up in Stalin's labour camps). He is the Western intellectual, usually but not necessarily socialist in outlook, who idealizes the brotherliness of the Russian people, even while harbouring no illusions about the nature of the Soviet political system. He is the political romantic who, in reaction against the superficiality of the Western public media and consumer market, seeks affirmation in self-sacrifice. Would it be fair also to suggest that Aksyonov is, among other things, seeking through Luchnikov to understand and exorcize his own earlier obsessions? At any rate, Luchnikov's highly coloured career, divided between journalism, motor-racing, politics and women, has much in common with that of Aksyonov's earlier characters.

To achieve his aim, Luchnikov puts the whole barrage of public relations at the service of his campaign. He veils the truth about Soviet society, appeals to people's yearning for brotherhood and national identity, to their idealism and capacity for self-sacrifice. By a superb piece of irony, his principal opponent is Kuzenkov, the very Soviet official who is responsible for advising the Party Central Committee on Crimean matters. For very high-ranking apparatchiks the Crimea has become a much-valued holiday retreat from the dreary reality back at home, and Kuzenkov is no exception. Such is his affection for the decadent, disreputable but enjoyable ways of the West that in the end he is prepared to do almost anything to prevent the Sovietization of the Crimea.

He is unsuccessful, however. Old habits prevail, and brutality wins out over subtlety and diplomacy. Even when the Crimean population votes in a referendum for incorporation into the homeland, the Soviet leadership can imagine no gentler way of implementing reunification than by direct military occupation. The Crimean population, on the other hand, long shielded against reality by the advertising world and the media, observe their enslavement on the "telly" without realizing what is happening: they imagine the sight of Red Army soldiers smashing the TV cameras is just another public relations gimmick.

As a whole, *Ostrov Krym* bears the marks of a year Aksyonov spent in America in 1975. The setting provides the opportunity for a satirical survey of both Soviet and Western outlooks and life-styles. Its satire is relatively good-humoured, as if the author felt more at ease with his generation and his own past experience than when writing *Ozhog*. All the same, it is obviously meant as a warning, certainly to us, perhaps to himself too.

These two novels, *Ozhog* and *Ostrov Krym*, are certainly the most significant works Aksyonov has yet published. He has surmounted the superficiality of many of his early publications without losing his literary touch, indeed while enhancing it. With their appearance, he becomes a Western as well as a Russian writer (the term *émigré* seems inappropriate, in view of the intense Soviet-rootedness of what he writes). Like most (though not quite all) of the best Soviet writers, he has expanded his creativity and self-awareness to a point where they have become incompatible with continued membership of the Writers' Union, or even, apparently, with continued citizenship of the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1980 he left his homeland, and shortly afterwards was deprived of his citizenship. His final literary act had been the attempt to publish an almanac, *Metropol*, in which the current generation of young writers could publish as he had been published twenty years earlier. That was the last straw, evidently, for the literary bureaucrats. The losers are Aksyonov's Soviet readers, and, ultimately, the Writers' Union itself. On the evidence of these two books, Aksyonov will now reach, and be appreciated by, an international audience.



Photography, according to Elliott Erwitt, a selection of whose work appears in World Photography, *edited by Bryn Campbell (320pp. Hamlyn. £15. 0 600 37244 8), is "simply a function of noticing things, no more". This refreshingly unpretentious view of his art has borne fruit in notably witty and acutely observed pictures, such as that of a glumly nude middle-aged couple knitting and sipping coffee on a garden bench, or a Magritte-like juxtaposition of two photographs of deckchairs on a deserted promenade – the first, showing them occupied by an equally dissociated couple, the second blowing empty in the wind. The occupant of the baroque chariot above was photographed in 1955. See also cover picture.*

The lenient lash

By R. J. Hollingdale

BRYAN P. GRENVILLE:
Kurt Tucholsky
The Ironic Sentimentalist
Edited by R. W. Last
124pp. Oswald Wolff. £4.25.
0 85496 074 0

"The great satirist", Bryan Grenville begins, "is the guilty conscience of his age". If this is so, it would explain why Kurt Tucholsky must probably be called something other than a great satirist. He had too great a sense of humour and was too good-natured to be anything as awesome, unbending and unpleasant as the guilty conscience of his age.

Too high claims are made on his behalf in this informative and very readable study: he is "the greatest satirist at work in Germany during the years of the Weimar Republic" and is later advanced to "Germany's most prominent twentieth-century satirist" and "the conscience of Germany". This is a pity, because to contest such claims seems to imply a denigration which Tucholsky certainly does not deserve.

The first of Tucholsky's writings I ever read was a minuscule piece called "At Last the Truth about Remarque". It purports to be a résumé of a magazine article in which the facts of Remarque's career are to be revealed for the first time and the author of *Im Westen nichts Neues* exposed as a new draft-dodger who never came within a hundred miles of the enemy. Remarque, it is disclosed, is a Jew, and his life a series of ludicrous and discreditable escapades, some of which deserve the attention of the Public Prosecutor. This degraded figure is then contrasted with the noble German whom, in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, he has slandered.

The target of the satire is, of course, its ostensible author, and, beyond him, the German nationalist Right and its ghastly prejudices. But its most immediately obvious quality is that it is funny, and this takes the edge from the "satire", whose victim is thus made to seem perhaps comically ridiculous and brainless but certainly not hateful or loathsome. To make a comparison with the greatest of English satires, Tucholsky is here at the stage of the Voyage to Lilliput.

Did he ever voyage further? Sometimes, perhaps; the quotation Mr Grenville gives from Schloss *Gripsholm* certainly depicts the Yahoos at play. But not, I think, typically: and the reason is that he was not a good hater; his sense of humour kept getting in the way of hatred.

So did that part of him which Mr Grenville seems to have singled out as his most prominent and has called "the ironic sentimentalist". This phrase is quite accurate, and it places Tucholsky in the company to which he rightly belongs: not that of Swift but that of Heine – another journalist whose "preoccupation with politics . . . denied him the peace of mind" to produce a large work, and who would have liked to have been the scourge of the German conscience but was too witty and human, and possessed too large an understanding of his intended victim, to be able to lay on the lash with anything resembling fury.

There may be some disagreement here as to what really constitutes satire; some of the passages from Tucholsky which Mr Grenville quotes under the rubric "The Practice of Satire" seem not satirical at all but unambiguous denunciations of abuses. For the rest, however, I cannot see why his plea that Tucholsky be read and taken seriously should not be granted, even if only because anyone who reads Tucholsky is doing himself a favour.

Gas Lamp

In old downtown Boston down on Milk Street,
up two flights, near the gas lamp, the dark tailor
nervously waits for the midwife. August heat
has worn the woman out. Amid the squalor
she looks around the bed, clutching a cape
she brought from London as a child. It's dawn
and dirty. The dark tailor wants to escape
to his tiny shop. The woman's sheets are drawn
below her waist. She isn't hollering now;
her eyes are dark and still; blood on her thumbs.
Her name is Sarah. No I'm guessing. How,
untold, am I to know? Hot day has worn
into the room. The midwife finally comes,
It's 1893. Sarah dies. My father's born.

Willis Barnstone

Dimensions of dissent

By Kenneth O. Morgan

SIMON HOGGART and DAVID LEIGH:
Michael Foot: a Portrait
216pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0-340 27600 2

These are not the best of times for a historical assessment of Michael Foot. Now, more than ever, he resembles a beleaguered prophet, born a century out of his time. His party is disintegrating around him; the Praetorian guard of the left treats his leadership with the same undemocratic contempt that they showed for right-wing figures like Gaitskell in the past. The forthcoming Labour Party conference could be Foot's Gethsemane, as August 1914 was Keir Hardie's, the cruel end not only to one remarkable career, but to an ancient tradition of popular dissent which began at Putney in 1647 and spluttered out at Wembley in 1981. It is all too easy to anticipate the journalists' interpretation already crystallizing to sum up the life and times of Michael Foot. Some years ago, Peter Jenkins wrote a memorable account in the *Guardian* of Foot gyrating at the Commons dispatch box, his hair untidy, his collar askew, his manner Thespian and his few facts wrong. He seemed the very embodiment of Labour as permanent opposition, the natural heir of such lishmaels as Hardie and Lansbury, not so much an Anabaptist as a Ranter, nourishing the "red flame of socialist courage" in the doctrinal purity of the wilderness, but with scant gifts of constructive thought or creative statesmanship. More than most of his contemporaries, Michael Foot has been taken as the paradigm of Aneurin Bevan's political virgins. He symbolizes, apparently, the apotheosis of the Labour left in all its gesticulating futility, the supreme personification of a party (to adopt Churchill's jibe of sixty years ago) uniquely unfit to govern.

Yet it is clear that Foot's career is vastly more complicated than that. As is well known, he is a man of immense personal charm, courtesy and attractiveness, a figure of generosity and integrity. He is an admirable representative of that very English tradition of eccentricity (often linked with upper Hampstead) that has so often forced its erratic way to the top in British politics. More important, he embodies a powerful creative thrust of populistic radicalism that has been constant in British public life for almost two centuries (certainly more so than the soggy, consensual centrism which is sometimes thought to reflect the native political genius). Foot's role in the British dissenting tradition is a complex one, and so is his career. A man who identifies both with the Levellers and Cromwell, with the Whigs and the Nonconformists, with Swift and Hazlitt, who uses the style of Tory Democrats such as Disraeli, Lord Randolph Churchill or Beaverbrook to propel himself to the leadership of the inchoate forces of the British left, is clearly multidimensional, full of the ambiguities of an English heritage of popular protest that partisans both on the left and the right too often oversimplify to the point of parody. Again, for an instinctive "trouble-maker", a most élitist gadfly, Foot is not a natural resident of the wilderness. He comes from a regional background and a family born to rule, a dissenting West-Country Hatfield, as John Vincent has shrewdly pointed out. He has usually been a political realist, like his mentors Cripps and Bevan, never a fellow-traveller nor a pacifist, throwing in his lot at decisive moments in his career with the mainstream of a Labour Party aspiring for power rather than with a sectarian, isolated far left. Not for nothing did Alan Taylor see Michael Foot as a "compromiser", steering in times of crisis serenely down the middle of the road. Barbara Castle wrote perceptively in her diary of the basic rationalist Liberalism of the "collective Foot type", the most conformist of nonconformists, heir of Gladstone and Bright as well as of the astonishing Isaac of the tribe. Michael Foot's kaleidoscopic career is a saga of subtle shifts and contrasts, and any book that sheds further light on its complexities is to be welcomed.

Unfortunately, few of them are illuminated in this pot-boiling biography. *Michael Foot: a Portrait*, by two journalists, part-authors respectively of works on the Lib-Lab pact of 1977 and the sexual politics of Jeremy Thorpe. They trace Foot's life briefly down to his election as party leader on November 10, 1980. There is, regrettably, no comment of any kind on his shattering experiences as party leader since then. The book is at its most interesting in its beginning and its conclusion. It is informative and affectionate on the Foot family background in Plymouth. It comes to further life in the closing pages where first-hand journalistic knowledge of the parliamentary manoeuvrings of 1976-79 provides more of substance. The account of Foot's serpentine dealings with such as Mr Molyneux of of the Ulster Unionists (with unfortunate part-victims like the homosexuals of Northern Ireland, whether Protestant or Catholic) is deft and instructive. In between, we are not offered much. The book is superficial on the 1930s, largely silent on the war years, and most disappointing on the 1945-55 period and the origins of Bevanism. The sources consulted are inadequate, particularly for a study of the Labour left. Mark Jenkins's excellent study of the Bevanites, for instance, has not been used at all, while the recourse to the pages of *Tribune* is patchy. Such anomalies as the champion of free speech and party tolerance endorsing the expulsion of a fellow-traveller like Platts-Mills and the stern disciplining of the Nenni telegrammers are not discussed. Generous though he may usually be, Michael Foot, like most politicians, has his hard side, as Mrs Castle found out in 1976. What the book does most usefully is etch in some personal material, gleaned mainly from interviews with Foot's relatives and contemporaries. His shy, indrawn personality; his nervous disabilities; his relationship with young women (including the youthful Barbara Castle, with whom he had the depressing experience of reading *Das Kapital* in a Bloomsbury attic); his filial devotion to such varied patrons as William Mellor and Lord Beaverbrook; his intense personal loyalty, to his Cabinet colleagues and –especially to Nye Bevan ("emotional spasm" and all), are spelt out in detail. A proper assessment of the political importance of Michael Foot will take more time, research and analytical rigour than Hoggart and Leigh have felt inclined to offer, but they provide some helpful nuggets for future authors to exploit.

Four phases were crucial in the making of Michael Foot. The first three were each shaped by one powerful individual. The earliest was overshadowed by father Isaac, who bequeathed to his four sons a powerful and privileged background of dissenting protest. Radical rural Liberalism, the quasi-pacifist overtones, the obsession with drink, the ritual genuflections to Cromwell, on to the dissenting academy at Leighton Park and finally to cosmopolitan realism at Wadham College, Oxford – they are all there. It is a primrose path for a pilgrim of the old left. There are puzzling features – all those thousands of books, for instance. Were they ever in fact for reading, or merely for gutting to provide useful quotations in political perorations – or perhaps merely a substitute for wall-paper? Yet it is an attractive, comfortable background, without the *angst* inbred in the regional bases of the young Joe Chamberlain, Lloyd George or Bevan. Among the more notable features is the capacity for the dissidence of dissent to reproduce within itself, as Michael delicately veered away from Isaac's Victorian Liberalism, and as Paul has latterly forsworn his uncle's commitment to parliamentary socialism. The Foots are never still and they are never dull.

The second phase, of course, was the 1930s, which galvanized the young Oxford half-pacifist, fresh from "King and Country" excitements, into the Popular Front enthusiasms of the time, and finally into the writing of *Guilty Men*, the outstanding political tract of the century, the Junius letters of our time. In conventional terms, this was a period that saw Foot's formal conversion to Labour and to the left-wing journalism of *Tribune* (after being sacked by Kingsley Martin in a quite amazing misjudgment of his brilliant young journalist). But more relevant to Foot's political outlook, one suspects, was a dawning affinity for cross-party connections and populist coalitions. The relationship with Cripps, a moralistic High Church patrician only recently converted to socialism and to politics, was decisive. It has led Foot into a wide range of unexpected alliances, from the Unity Front to (in recent years) a friendship with Enoch Powell. The relationship with Beaverbrook and the editorship of the *Standard*, of which too much have been made by suspicious critics, were a continuation of this approach. Foot admired Beaverbrook's iconoclasm, bohemianism and taste in Austrian actresses. This style was as inseparable a part of the dissenting tradition as were "the little terriers" of the tin Bethels in Devonshire. But he was never swallowed whole by Beaverbrook. When the old tyrant tried to stop Foot publishing a wartime exposé of the links of the Tory right with Mussolini, the young editor resigned. It was an act of integrity by an honest and honourable man. Characteristically, he bore little rancour towards his former patron. It is not as difficult as some critics imagine to be loyal to your friends.

The third phase lasted from 1945, when Foot entered the Commons as MP for Devonport, until 1960 when he re-entered it as member for Ebbw Vale. The latter, of course, was Bevan's old constituency and the Welsh tribune was obviously the dominant influence throughout – down to 1963, indeed, when Wilson's election as party leader was toasted by the old Bevanite survivors as some kind of supposed posthumous tribute. Since Foot's claim to be a consistent figure on the left dates from this third phase, the silence of the book on key aspects of it is disappointing. There is much more to be said, too, about Foot's remarkable biography of Bevan than is implied here. In fact, it is clear that Foot was never a natural voice for Keep Left. Like Bevan he had an urge for unity. *Tribune*, indeed, had official links with Transport House in the 1948-50 period. It defended the Attlee government loyally down to January 1951; it may have been Bevan's troubles at the Ministry of Labour as much as the scale of the rearmament programme that led to a change of stance. The resignation of Bevan then led Foot into the later furious quarrels with the Gaitskellite right over a range of foreign policy and defence issues in the 1950s. In the end, of course, the final breach was with Bevan himself when he turned savagely on the unilateralists at Brighton in 1957. In the variegated ranks of CND, Foot was again immersed in the populistic protest of a democratic crusade, as in the 1930s. But as then, he was never an irreconcilable. The eventual defeat of CND was probably a relief; it gave him a positive role in public life again. The election of Harold Wilson provided the justification. Foot persuaded himself that "the incredible has happened" and that the old left had won at last.

The final phase is the period of the flirtation with power, from Foot's re-entry to the PLP in 1963, through the years of strained loyalty under Wilson, the decision to stand for the Shadow Cabinet in 1970 and the period of unquenchable loyalty as a Cabinet minister from 1974. His election as party leader in November 1980 was the natural outcome. The authors make too much of Foot's alleged "change of course" in 1970

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when he became a front-bench spokesman for the first time; the decisive shift had come with the election of Wilson seven years earlier. These later years have not been marked by outstanding legislative achievement; Foot's lack of attention to administrative details is notorious, while he fell foul of his journalist colleagues over his amended Labour Relations Bill. On the other hand, they have been far from wasted years, with a temporary truce between trade unions and government after the débâcle of Heath's last year, such useful creations as ACAS, a political salvage operation that helped arrest inflation in its most uncontrolled phase, and at least one heroic failure, Foot's devotion to Welsh and Scottish devolution. This last was perhaps the product of a somewhat uncritical regard for the qualities of the Celts. As Bevan once observed, "The Welsh are good, but they're not that good". The time as party leader over the past twelve months has been difficult. Yet it is hard to think how any leader bent on preserving the unity and mass appeal of a disintegrating coalition could have done much better. At least it has been an appropriate end to an experience with power, developed only in the twilight of Foot's career but nurtured in the instincts and inheritance of a lifetime.

Any biography tends to provoke reflections on the limitations and strengths of its subject. Foot's weaknesses have often been spelt out. For much of his career – though assuredly not at the present moment – he has been a rhetorician rather than a creative politician. His understanding of men and issues at times has been deficient. In domestic policy, like many on the Labour left from the earliest years of the party, he seems to have little understanding of, or interest in, economics. Such arcane themes as the exchange rate or the management of the money supply – both highly relevant to the establishment of a socialist society – tend to reduce him to populistic denunciation of bankers and multinationals, an updated version of Cobbett's "Thing". In foreign affairs, save for the brief flirtation with the idea of a socialist united Europe in 1947-48 which attracted Foot, Crossman, Barbara Castle, Silverman and others, he has tended to be a Little Englander, unduly preoccupied with a simplistic notion of lost national sovereignty. The great error of CND – and, equally of its Gaitskellite adversaries – was vastly to exaggerate British international influence in the early 1960s. For all its nobler aspects, the debate on the bomb was in many ways an extended essay in parochialism. Foot has never shown the fundamental grasp of overseas politics and economics which has been part of Denis Healey's intellectual equipment from his time in the party's international department under Morgan Phillips.

And yet Foot has remained a figure of major stature and substance in our public affairs. The growing crisis within his party merely underlines his importance, perhaps indispensability, for the British democratic left. His very Englishness and insularity have surely been his – and Labour's – strength. He has sensed the way Labour has evolved within a native radical tradition. More than most figures on the left, he has understood the nuances of Labour as a movement and not simply as a machine. His reasoned reply to Tony Benn, published in the *Guardian* on September 10 last, revealed an intimate, instinctive feeling for the organic relationship of the various elements in the party. The parliamentary party, the national executive, the annual conference, the unions, constituency management committees, party workers and sympathizers at the grass roots, have all played their vital parts in sustaining Labour's coalition. The balance between them may shift, or give rise to internal party arguments. But the essence of Labour's appeal as the leading democratic socialist party in the world, ever since it supplanted the Liberals in the early 1920s, has resided in the creative tension between its various elements. As Keir Hardie observed at the party conference in 1907, "there must be free play between the sections. Otherwise they were in for a spill". The present missionary crusade conducted by the millenarian disciples of the prophet Benn bids fair to produce that very "spill" against which the wise pragmatic statesmanship of Hardie warned so long ago. To treat members of parliament, the Shadow Cabinet, even the party's leader and prospective prime minister, as no more than ventriloquist's dummies trained to reproduce the erratic, ill-thought-out and often contradictory resolutions cobbled together amidst the emotions of an annual conference, is not merely insulting to the dignity of public men and women, it is totally at variance with the vibrant democracy that the Labour Party (and especially the TLP) has always represented. But then to view Mr Benn as any kind of democrat, rather than a *déclassé* populist with Tory Democrat overtones, has always been a mistake.



The austerity of the early post-war years of Labour government which, in the public mind, became associated with the policies of Sir Stafford Cripps, one of Michael Foot's mentors, found an equally potent symbol in tinned snoek. This fish, which in its natural state closely resembled the barracuda, disappointed its sponsors, the government, by establishing itself as the staple diet of wireless and music-hall comedians rather than of the public. The illustration above – a rare sight on British tables of the period – is taken from The Time of Our Lives, *a pictorial history of Britain since 1945, by Alastair Burnet and Willie Landels (208pp. Elm Tree Books: £9.95. 0 241 10666 4).*

Michael Foot, as he has shown in his interventions during and since the Trades Union Congress at Brighton, understands this. As mass orator, pamphleteer and communicator extraordinary, he has related the British variant of democratic socialism to a long but still relevant history of libertarian protest – in other words, to the real world. In his respect for Parliament, for representative democracy, for the pluralism and tolerance embedded in the culture of his nation, Foot has been in the best sense a force for stability. His appeal to the view taken in the past by every leader of the Labour Party of the correct relationship between the parliamentary party and the annual conference is not mere rhetoric. It is entirely rational to show how Keir Hardie, Arthur Henderson, George Lansbury, and Aneurin Bevan, every great working-class leader that the British Labour movement has produced, all honoured and prized the parliamentary mode of democracy, and regarded it as the key to winning the commanding heights of power so that a socialist commonwealth could ultimately be created. The contrast between these great politicians of the past and the present self-appointed Trotskyite tribunes of the far left is instructive; so, too, is the profound loyalty that Aneurin Bevan always displayed towards the achievements of the Attlee government (even in the worst months of the 1950s), compared with the attitude taken by the heir to Lord Stansgate towards Cabinet colleagues with whom he served for five years. The contrast is no less clear between Michael Foot, this benign and civilized symbol of our radical heritage, and the sectarian, post-Marxist zealots currently undermining the Labour Party. Foot has long seen himself as the Hazlitt *de nos jours*. Certainly Citizen Foot might have been more at home in earlier, revolutionary times as a species of Methodist Danton. His last service and testament now could be a final appeal from the Old Left to the New, or at least to the less doctrinaire segment of it, to re-articulate and vindicate a long, creative, noble legacy of protest which is now being corrupted and destroyed. His admirable intervention at the Brighton TUC made a powerful start. Michael Foot's heart may not immediately warm to the prospect of becoming the Edmund Burke of Ebbw Vale. The Bennite multitude may appear mulish, rather than positively swinish. But, in the last stages of a dignified and wholly honourable career, which has added lustre and panache to our public dialogue, it could yet offer a new beginning.

Setting course for Jutland

By Peter Gretton

JOHN WINTON:
Jellicoe
320pp. Michael Joseph. £12.50.
0 7181 1813 8

John Winton is a prolific writer who has published naval novels, naval history and a biography of Sir Walter Raleigh. This is his first biography of a modern sailor and he has made, on the whole, a good job of it. Not surprisingly, he has fallen into the biographer's trap of coming under the spell of his subject. Jellicoe was a wonderful man. He was modest, competent and completely trustworthy. His integrity was of the highest and his officers and men looked upon him with respect and affection. He had faults, however, and Mr Winton perhaps makes lighter of them than is right. He mentions Jellicoe's insistence on centralization and his need to supervise details which should have been left to staff officers. He hardly mentions at all one of the worst faults of the Grand Fleet at Jutland; its inadequate training in night fighting, which resulted in Jellicoe deliberately avoiding a night encounter.

However, the description of the Battle of Jutland is excellent; I have yet to read a better in a comparatively short account. But again, Winton tends to minimize the lack of training in making enemy reports which so perplexed the Commander-in-Chief. We are told the reasons why Jellicoe turned away to avoid a torpedo attack by the German flotillas at the end of the day, but Winton does not consider what might have happened if the turn had been made towards the enemy instead of away.

The account of the introduction of the convoy system in April, 1917, is also very good. Winton understands the issues and the reasons why convoys had to come. Jellicoe started with a built-in prejudice against them which he never lost; at the critical period, he was indecisive. When, at last, his staff were convinced of the need for convoys, he seems unenthusiastically to have acquiesced. I would have liked to see mention of Commander R. Henderson, who did more than any other officer to convince the naval staff that convoys were needed. (This particular chapter should be read by those concerned with maritime strategy today, they would learn some unchanging truths from it).

Arthur Pollen receives mention only as a critic of Jellicoe's attitude to the convoy system, and his deep involvement in fire-control matters is referred to only in passing. Pollen's system, which he started to try and persuade the Navy to take as early as 1905, was far superior to that chosen by the Admiralty. This was proved by the passage of time – the system was eventually adopted after the First World War – and by the report of a Royal Commission in 1925. At the time of the controversy Admirals Wilson and Moore were largely responsible for the rejection of Pollen's superior system, but Jellicoe was in positions of power in the world of naval gunnery during most of the long period when Pollen was urging that it be adopted. Pollen's system allowed accurate gunfire to be maintained while the firing ship was altering course, which the rival system did not. What a difference it would have made if it had been fitted at Jutland.

On another matter too, the author lets Jellicoe off lightly. When he left the post of Controller to go to sea in 1910, he had just discovered that British shells were defective and did not explode unless the angle of impact was a large one. He referred this matter to his successor, Moore, who did nothing. Again, what a difference it would have made at Jutland if our shells had been fully effective. Jellicoe knew that something was wrong but he did not take action to cure it, for he must have known that Moore was not achieving any results.

While I agree with Winton that Jellicoe was universally liked and generally admired, there were exceptions. Haig's derogatory remarks are noted, but the devastating criticism by Keyes is omitted. Keyes wrote to General Hamilton after the war, "Jellicoe would have made a very good Chief Staff officer to a fighting Admiral". This remark, made by an officer who had been a battleship divisional commander in the Grand Fleet, was unfair, but it represented the views of the "Up and At 'em" school in the Navy.

Winton tends to perpetuate the mistaken idea, also recently advanced by other writers on naval history, that the serious defects of the late Victorian Navy were due to the influence of a dominant aristocratic element among the officers. A glance at a Navy List of, say, 1880, will show that the officers who were peers or sons of peers amounted to three per cent of the total, while those whose names might indicate a connection with the aristocracy amount to another three per cent. The Navy was essentially middle class, and was manned by the sons of naval officers, parsons and country gentlemen.

There are one or two factual errors. The Fisher-Selborne reforms of 1905 did not increase the chances of ratings reaching the wardroom; that was to come when Winston Churchill was First Sea Lord in 1912. There is a muddle too about medals. The DSC was not instituted for ratings. Winton's impression that Jellicoe was enthusiastic over the Royal Naval Air Service is suspect; in 1913, he gave up the superintendence of the RNAS and transferred it to the Fourth Sea Lord – all because of a minor row with Churchill about protocol.

John Winton has written a good book about a great, though not a very great, man.

Stirring things up

By Victoria Glendinning

PHILIP ZIEGLER:
Diana Cooper
336pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0 241 10659 1

Who is she? Who was she? Unlikely though it may seem to the older generation, there are now sections of the educated population for whom the name Lady Diana Cooper will ring only faint bells. She was born Lady Diana Manners in 1892, a daughter of Lady Granby, later Duchess of Rutland – though not, probably, of Lord Granby, the future Duke: "Marital fidelity was not a virtue highly esteemed among the British aristocracy." She was "the cream of the cream of the cream", as her biographer Philip Ziegler says – and that was at a time when gold-top creaminess counted. She was a member of an exclusive caste.

> Some of them were cultivated, most of them were tolerably polite, even to members of the lower and middle classes. Their pride, however, was overweening; their self-confidence astonishing; their inbred sense of superiority daunting to all who did not share their advantages. The world, by and large, took them at their own valuation.

Lady Diana, bright and beautiful and very grand, became the best-known Englishwoman of her generation. She has enjoyed the popular fame which nowadays is reserved for athletes and film stars. It must be strange to have one's legend examined in one's own lifetime, but for Lady Diana there has been no question, Mr Ziegler says, of deferring publication. She has, in any case, always "preferred tarnished fame to public indifference".

In the heyday of her glamour she used to receive numbers of anonymous letters, most of them adulatory *but some* the disturbing products of "envy and impotent hatred". One can understand why. Philip Ziegler himself in his foreword, confesses to some initial ambivalence, referring to the "many generations of middle-class respectability" that lay behind him. Lady Diana was not in this sense respectable, nor wanted to be. Much of the material Mr Ziegler has included is trivial – sepia anecdotes, scraps of tattered repartee, echoes of amorous skirmishes in long-gone bedrooms, all the shreds of a life that can fall cold as autumn leaves on the printed page. Were this the thin bright biography it nearly is, a thin bright response to it would be in order. But that would be to disregard the confusion of reactions and overreactions – from hostility, distaste, disbelief disapproval, to envy (above all, envy), astonishment, amusement – that the book and it subject elicit.

Lady Diana's life gives the lie to all morality and scruple, makes happy hay of every precept and principle. She is the exception that proves the rule to have been ludicrous. As a young woman she was wild, selfish, theatrical, and irresistible company. She drank too much too often; she doped herself with morphia and chloroform. She loved reading, talking, parties, surprises. She loved men and they loved her. She was from the beginning an adventuress, and she throve exceedingly.

"I like to be a Queen or a tramp," she said. She was both. If she had come from the slums it would have been easy to applaud her – irrationally easy, for in fact she robbed the poor of nothing. The capital and influence represented by the emeralds, furs, Chippendale chairs, motor cars, crates of champagne and jobs for the boys that came her way would in any case have remained in the hands of a small ruling elite, her own class. She just saw to it that a steady flow in cash and kind was channelled in her direction.

She thought, when she was little: "O, I'm glad I'm a girl. I'm glad I'm a girl. Somebody will always look after me." She needed to be protected and cossetted always; and she needed, and created, excitement, even as a child: "Already Diana was ready to welcome anything that would stir things up . . . the drowning of an aunt was better than nothing." There was another drowning later, in 1914, when one of her admirers, Sir Denis Anson, jumped to his death in the Thames at three in the morning at the end of a boat party. It was not Lady Diana's fault; but her apparent "chill indifference" to the tragedy struck some people as peculiar. Anson had given her his watch to hold, and she sent it round to his mother via Edward Horner (who was also in love with her). She avoided all emotional confrontations: when her former governess's only son was killed in the war she pretended to ring the doorbell six times while her mother waited in a taxi: "Isn't it contemptible?" she said. She was candid about her cowardice. She was candid about everything, seeing no need for shame or dissimulation.

Physical sex meant little to her, and her more purposeful lovers – or most of them – were fought off vigorously at the last ditch. Before her marriage they were allowed, excitingly, into her bed and, maybe equally excitingly, nothing much more. She was a tease. There was safety in numbers. She lived to have, and had, sheaves of adoring distinguished admirers, and enjoyed the daily letters full of the literary flights and inflated compliments ("dewdrops") beloved of the Golden Generation. These multiple amours have about them something fantastical, and conventional, and *sportif*. To be in love with Lady Diana, if not a sport of kings (the future Edward VIII was not among her conquests, in spite of her mother's hopes), was at least the sport of peers, politicians, and tycoons, and anyone who had money, talent or influence. To adore Lady Diana was, Mr Ziegler says, to join a club. It was to be invited to the party, to be where the fun was. If she had not spread her favours so widely, if she had called the bluff on each or any of the protestations of love, the party would have been over for them all.

The pleasure of her company could come expensive:

> "Money is fine," was one of her rules in life. She had no wish to be extravagantly rich, but she wanted the things that money could buy – comfort, clothes, holidays abroad, security – and she saw no need for over-sensitive scruples in getting what she wanted. If it pleased the rich to give her money or lavish presents, then it certainly pleased her to receive them. She would shamelessly exploit friends with wealth or power. Freedom with her friends' money was linked to parsimony in the use of her own.

On only a few occasions, as reported in this book, was her acquisitiveness and expectation of special treatment foiled. She asked Montgomery to give her a motor caravan; he smiled, and gave her three signed photographs of himself instead. She had met her match there. Later, not all her machinations to have her son given diplomatic postings in locations that suited herself worked out quite as she had hoped. But as a matter of course she would bombard ministers, both Prime and Foreign, with demands that her friends and relations be removed from the front line, or sent to the front line, or retained in office, or found a nicer job, or "looked after" – and mostly she got what she wanted. "Strings were there to be pulled, and never did pride or delicacy inhibit her from pulling them with a will when the need came." She pulled harder than most – but some string-pulling was of course accepted, even expected, in her social circle, just as were her routine jokes about Jews and "niggy-wigs". You can't blame an individual for what is History's responsibility.

She loved Raymond Asquith, who married her friend Katharine Horner and was killed in the First World War – as were Patrick Shaw-Stewart, the Grenfell brothers, Charles Lister, George Vernon, and so many of her coterie. Alcohol assuaged worn nerves – champagne, that is, and vodka and absinthe: "Whisky and gin were almost inconceivable drinks for a woman: to reduce oneself to a stupor with morphia was risky, perhaps immoral, but to drink whisky and soda would have been common – a far worse offence." Correct spelling was also a little common; Lady Diana wrote expressive, funny, ill-spelt letters. During the Second World War she wrote to the War Office suggesting the provision of "some very strong magnates [sic] in open spaces . . . to attract the land mines that come down slowly by parachute".

Lady Diana did not marry a peer, nor even a very strong magnate, but Duff Cooper, who was considered a poor catch by the Duke and Duchess of Rutland. But the marriage was voted a great success. The party did not end there for either of them. Sometimes they did not dine alone together for months at a stretch. Mr Ziegler does not paint a pretty picture of Duff Cooper. His political career and literary gifts have little place in this narrative; and in private life he was, except with his wife, often louche and bad-tempered – and "popularly believed" to be a drunkard, a lecher, and a gambler, says Mr Ziegler, tiptoeing through the tulips, having conveyed by a mass of anecdote and incident elsewhere that these popular beliefs were far from unjustified.

Duff Cooper's infidelities began on their honeymoon. He needed variety. Lady Diana encouraged his affairs, providing always that the ladies received her seal of approval. She was a loving, loyal, dependent wife, though an inconvenient one. Duff Cooper was ambassador in Paris at the end of the war; but in spite of Ernest Bevin's fancy for Lady Diana, he was replaced by Sir Oliver Harvey during the post-war Labour administration. Lady Diana flouted diplomatic convention by staying in her house at nearby Chantilly, with as much of her own ambassadorial "court" as she could muster, and proceeded to make Lady Harvey's life hell.

She continued, and continues to be admired and talked about. For all her ruthlessness she was the person everyone wanted to be with. "It is always hard to define the quality which makes one person stand out among a multitude", writes Mr Ziegler. And of her famous performance in *The Miracle*: "So many unbiased observers praised Diana's performance than one cannot doubt it was in some way remarkable. It is harder to decide in what the quality lay." Her beauty is an insufficient explanation. Heretics said she looked like a sheep. The faithful, who were in the majority, said she looked like a lily, an angel, the Queen of Jericho. The photographs in the book don't help much (though there is a bizarre picture of Lord Goodman masquerading as a monk sitting with a mature Lady Diana dressed as a nun, her hand raised in blessing or threat, "at a fancy-dress ball in Wiltshire".) Her star quality, easily deduced from the evidence, has to be taken at face value too. "Suppressed emotions must at some time emerge", ventures Mr Ziegler with reference to her lifelong bouts of depression. But no serious investigation of their cause is allowable. "Only housemaids mope."

Lady Diana was, is, a natural phenomenon like the Painted Desert. Another outsize natural phenomenon, Winston Churchill, can have the last word. During the First World War Lady Diana worked as a VAD, nursing badly burned patients. At the same time, her scandalous behaviour at parties was causing raised eyebrows. Churchill said:

> The world has dealt very harshly with her, but she's brave and hard-working and very misunderstood, and she's of great worth in this *sad* world. Why the poor soldiers dying in agony breathe her name as they die, Clemmie, you must have her to lunch.

Information, please

Lex Parliamentaria or a *Treatise of the law and custom of the Parliaments of England*, by G P, Esq: first published in 1690 by Timothy Godwin, enlarged second edition published c 1740 by John Stagg and reissued in 1748 by Henry Lintot. The 1738 Bodleian catalogue identifies the author as "George Petyt" although without adducing evidence. I would be grateful for information about the authorship of this book (including any biographical data) and for insights into its subsequent history and influence.

Bernard J. Sussman.
Apt 5006, 4201 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20016.

Hyam Myer: (1904-78), artist who was a member of the London Group, exhibited at Agnew's and the Royal Academy, taught at St Martin's School of Art (1950-75). I am preparing a memoir of my uncle and a catalogue of his work, and should appreciate hearing from former students, colleagues, friends, and owners of his works.

Michael Grosvenor Myer.
34 West End, Haddenham, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

Copyright: if anyone knows who owns the copyright in the works of Alice Perrin (1867-1934). Maud Diver (1867-1945) and Otto Rothfeld (1876-1932), all of whom wrote fiction about India, I should be grateful to hear from them.

James Michie,
The Bodley Head, 9 Bow Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7AL.

Fritzi Massary (1882-1969), German actress and singer: any letters, anecdotes or other material, for a forthcoming book.

Patrick O'Connor.
26 Sheen Park, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UW.

Jargon: any suggestions of words or phrases, for inclusion in a Dictionary of Jargon, scheduled for publication in 1983. Jargon for these purposes may be defined as "professional slang" used by fellow-members of a trade, profession, club, team, etc. for communication among themselves and, deliberately or not, the exclusion of the rest of society.

Jonathon Green.
117 Achmore Road, London W9.

Lewis Fry Richardson (1881-1953): Quaker scientist who made fundamental contributions to meteorology and to the psychology of war. Personal reminiscences and information about unpublished work are sought for a biography.

H. Charnock,
D. M. Ashford.
c/o Department of Oceanography, The University, Southampton SO9 5NH.

Jules Verne: any letters or photographs, for publication in the *Bulletin de la société Jules Verne*.

William Butcher,
79 bis rue Monge, F 75005, Paris.

Augusta Webster (1837-94), Victorian poet, dramatist and essayist: information on the location of any of her letters; unpublished manuscripts, portraits, or other material, for a brief study of her poetry.

Florence Boos.
Department of English, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242.

The Writers' Guild: we are currently investigating writers-in-residence schemes and creative writing courses in this country, and are seeking information and opinions from the teachers and the taught.

Walter Jeffrey.
The Writers' Guild, 430 Edgware Road, London W2 1EH.

T.L.S.

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They may not mean to but they do

By Eric Korn

WILLIAM WHARTON:
Dad
149pp. Cape. £6.95.
0 224 02926 6

William Wharton's first novel, *Birdy*, was a stupendous anecdote about an adolescent who is having trouble making it as a human being and settles for making it as (and with) a canary. It was enthusiastically admired, but with some detachment: it is hard to identify with galloping ornithophilia, if galloping is the word. Wharton now moves nearer home, and writes with the same skill and pertinacity about the miseries and splendours of family life: but *Dad* will be read with detachment only by those fortunate enough not to have had parents. *Dad* may be a great novel – it displays many of the stigmata of greatness, including the readiness to be absurd. It is certainly an overpowering weepie in the modern West-coast interactive therapy tradition ("I've never touched my father like that, the kind of punch you give a man when you're feeling close").

Dad is not one of those family novels where the hero is an abstract notion of descent. It is about the bonds between the generations: hereditary, congenital or acquired: "Why is it I had to wait so long to know my Dad is a man like myself, more like me than anybody I've ever met . . . what is it that keeps fathers and sons so far apart?" Wharton's answer would seem to be "mothers, brothers, sisters, wives and eventually, grandsons". "That man's father is my father's son" is the book's epigraph, and it is with good reason that he uses only the second half of the conundrum.

The central narrator is fifty-two-year-old Jack Tremont (or Johnny or John or Jacky – symptomatically, everyone in the book has a different name for him), son to Jake and Belle (or Bess), brother to Joan, father to Billy and Marty. He is an escapee, who lives and paints in a desirable old mill near Paris, with lovely, supportive Vron (who never appears). He is fussy, kind, a slightly absurd over-age fellow-traveller of the peace-and-pot generation, "sucking in oxygen and running over my mantra" in tense moments. He is recalled to his parents' home in California by a telegram bringing news of his mother's heart attack: his unvarnished account of coping with a complex double geriatric nursing problem is intercut with shorter chapters in which Jack's son Billy describes their trip back East, across an America of highway accidents and pizza parlours, to catch a plane to Europe and security. This journey is ended – there is no need to keep the secret – by a telegram calling them back for the old man's funeral.

Jack's first job is to lift his father out of domestic incapacity and dependence, to teach him to wash up and keep himself clean. When the old man begins to respond, he rewards him with little bachelor treats, taking him down to the beach on his motorbike, or to a favourite bar for beer ("I'm seeing things differently like going to a zoo with a child"). He succeeds all too well, for when the implacable Mom comes back home she feels excluded; determined to be indispensable, she sweats and frets herself into another heart attack. Then the father has to have surgery for the removal of a malignant growth. An unsympathetic doctor, against the son's urgent advice, mentions the dire word "cancer", and old Jake is terrified into a mute regression, which the hospital blandly diagnoses as a rather sudden onset of senility.

Jack tries to care for him at home, but gives up after a brief nightmare of struggling with the inarticulate, incontinent, panic stricken but still powerful old man. Later, administrative incompetence and institutional indifference nearly kill Jake: the threat of a malpractice suit – perhaps the only way to wring the amenities of medicine out of a heartless system – at last wins him proper care. When he has been given up for dead – there is a marvellous passage of hysterical gaiety when his children set about the funeral arrangements in advance – he makes a sudden and astounding recovery, an "awakening" like one of Dr Sacks's post-encephalitic patients after a dose of L-dopa. With one bound Supergramp is free and twenty years younger, a merry old goat who takes to dressing up, smoking pot (which like youth is wasted on the young, he thinks) and inventing an earthquake detector based on the Coriolis force: when the water starts going down the plug-hole backwards it sounds a buzzer (would some physicist please step forward and adjudicate?) So relaxed does the old boy become that he reveals that he has spent most of the last thirty years inhabiting a fantasy of farm life in Cape May, New Jersey, fondling warm udders and pulling beets from the rich earth. His alter ago has an alteram familiam: "What on earth can I say to little Hank and Lizbet: I can't tell them their Daddy just made them up."

This finally convinces his wife that he is off the wall, but the Lutigian shrink Doctor Delibro is impressed and delighted with this elaborately furnished boli-bole, even comparing his patient with Tolkien, than which there can be no higher praise from a Lutigian shrink.

Jack pays some attention, at last, to the long- and loudly-suffering mother, and the going gets a bit heavy: "I feel guilty. I can't love her the way she wants to be loved. I have deep feelings she's obliterated Dad to her advantage." "You must realise she didn't do this alone. There's something in your father and yourself that allowed it to happen. After all your mother is only another human being, perhaps more scared, more motivated to dominate than most, probably with a weak ego." You see what he means, though after a description of one of her tantrums you may feel that if that is a weak ego, a strong one might open the San Andreas fault.

Perhaps too late for the novel's balance, too late to earn her more than dutiful, grudging sympathy – but that is the narrator's situation – we begin to see the old woman as less of a psychiatric monster, a sort of Rosemary's Granny, and more as a victim of her lifelong inability to cope with or express her feelings: "a diesel engine in a canoe", her son calls her. Her behaviour becomes more irrational, demanding: she makes life intolerable for her daughter and son-in-law. She needs to get away, nobody cares for her, Jake must be got out of the house before he murders her, he mustn't leave her, he is abandoning her, she never wants to see him again, they are kidnapping her husband. Pushed too far, her victim relapses classically into withdrawal and dementia: perhaps inside he is happy down on his funny farm. Not before time, Jack decides it's time to go home and let someone else try to cope.

Many readers of the novel may find themselves identifying morbidly with one or other of the guilty parties – unhappy families may not all be unhappy the same way, but there is a family resemblance. Others may feel that Larkin said it all in sixteen words. Yet for all its intricate charting of the currents of blame and responsibility, in the end this novel is a vote of confidence in the traditional family, or at least a pat on the head for the dear octopus and its willing victims.

Dad is a massive novel with massive faults: in the short, contrapuntal chapters Billy tells us little more about his father than his father has told us about himself; and there are portentous attempts to bring out larger themes – they leave their car in a brutal ghetto in Philadelphia, which makes Billy think the jungle is closing in; and this somehow relates to his grandfather's revelation, a few pages away, that *his* grandfather was a trapper who married an Oneida Indian and "lived practically like prehistoric people . . . I never owned a pair of shoes till we got to Philadelphia". Savagery to suvagery in four generations, in the city of brotherly love, in the family of the man without brothers. Moreover the novel's structure is gimmicky (in the final pages we see grandfather through grandson's eyes, and are let into grandfather's own stream of consciousness) and as obtrusive as scaffolding on a church front.

But its strengths are even more impressive: the unselfconscious revelation of the characters, people in a familiar extremity; the rich impasto of emotionally laden domestic detail, which is the stuff of family life; the unembarrassed handling of themes like geriatric sexuality and incontinence. If it sounds appalling, it appals only in parts – it is often very funny. And when the handkerchiefs are put away (and what an awful movie it is sure to become) it has more than a touch of greatness.

The story-teller in the kibbutz

By Judith Chernaik

AMOS OZ:
Where the Jackals Howl
Translated from the Hebrew by Nicholas De Lange and Philip Simpson
216pp. Chatto and Windus. £6.95.
0 7011 2571 3

It rarely happens that literature offers a more profound insight into politics and culture than does a decade's news reporting. The Israeli novelist Amos Oz has performed this rare service for his country, where every aspect of private life is fraught with political meaning, and every political act directly impinges on private life. His fiction is indispensable reading for anyone who wishes to understand the contradictions of life in Israel, the ideology that sustains it, and the passions that drive its people.

Oz writes as an insider, as a member of the community he describes, whether it be a kibbutz in the Jordan Valley or an army unit sent on a reprisal raid across the Syrian border. His is the traditional role of story-teller and historian: a role tolerated but never highly valued by the community, which sets more store by its warriors and elder statesmen. He is reluctant to judge his comrades, but there is no doubt that by temperament and conviction he is one of the peacemakers. He hears and sees more acutely than most, and has an uncanny gift for recording the distinctive features of his world, juxtaposing the socialist dreams and apocalyptic visions of the early Zionists, the naive arrogance of the young, and the nightmares of the mad and the embittered. The overwhelming impression left by his fiction is of the precariousness of individual and collective human effort, a common truth made especially poignant by a physical landscape thoroughly inhospitable to human settlement, and given tragic dimensions by the modern history of the Jews and its analogues in Biblical history.

Oz first came into international prominence ten years ago with the English publication of his second novel, *My Michael*. Set in Jerusalem in the 1950s, *My Michael* is presented as a young woman's painstaking record of her unhappy marriage to "a good-natured man" (a figure of pathos, since "good nature" can never entirely satisfy the demands of love or politics), of her effort to "forget nothing" and thereby to restore her own power of loving. Underlying her melancholy is a childhood memory of wild tomboy play with her "brothers", two beautiful Arab twins, whom she eventually sends forth in imagination to destroy the world that is oppressing her with its mediocrity. The application to modern Israeli politics is unmistakable; at the same time the vision of the interdependence of love and hate, good and evil, as they affect parent and child, husband and wife, lovers and enemies, transcends local boundaries. In spite of the biblical allusions that come so naturally to Oz's characters, and the occasional references to the modern Hebrew poet Bialik, it is to the great nineteenth-century French and Russian novelists that Oz seems most indebted, both in his craft and in his perception of life.

Two more novels were published in English after *My Michael*, along with two collections of novellas. *Elsewhere, Perhaps* (first published in Hebrew in 1966) portrays the tangled incestuous relations on a socialist kibbutz, presumably drawn from the kibbutz where Oz has lived and worked since the age of fifteen. In this novel of estrangement and reconciliation, gossip and sex are the principal realities within the kibbutz, but a keynote of Oz's fiction is struck by an outsider: "It's the simple, great themes which ought to be portrayed, like passion and death." These form the substance of a difficult and obscure third novel, *Touch the Water, Touch the Wind*, in which Oz abandons social and psychological realism for parable and fantasy, or rather, shifts the balance between these two strands in his earlier fiction. His themes remain the same, "simple elements in violent combination", the pathos of human effort in the face of the vast indifference of nature and time. The two collections of novellas, *Unto Death* and, most recently, *The Hill of Evil Counsel*, combine the sharp, realistic portrayal of Israeli life in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv with parable and myth, a mode singularly appropriate to a society which yokes Western rationalism and materialism to Eastern mystery and miracle.

Where the Jackals Howl is a collection of short stories published in Hebrew when Oz was in his early twenties, now substantially revised and published for the first time in English in book form. Two qualities are immediately apparent on reading these tales: the consummate, self-conscious craft of the writing, and the seriousness and truthfulness of the content. Kibbutz life provides a common background and inspiration – for apparently everyone on a kibbutz has a story. Two of the stories analyse a stern father's grief for a dead son. Others deal with sexual revenge – for the ideology of the kibbutz somehow fails to solve this most persistent of human problems.

Themes and images from one story recur in others: sunrise and sunset, the changing seasons, the extremes of climate (from the fierce heat of the *khamsin* to the winter chill of Jerusalem), the contours of a landscape rich in symbolic associations. The jackals of the title story, in particular, change shape and significance in each tale, as if in counterpoint to the human lives portrayed. On occasion this natural symbolism is made explicit, and becomes human and political: "It happens *sometimes* in the middle of the night *that a* plump house-dog hears the voice of his accursed brother. It is not from the dark fields that this voice comes; the dog's detested foe dwells in his own heart." In other stories the conflict between Jew and Arab is traced back to Cain and Abel, the tiller of the soil and the shepherd, one loved by God, the other rejected.

Most remarkable is the compassionate irony with which Oz treats all his characters, the maddened and the reasonable equally. The political and moral debate about ends and means is argued endlessly but inconclusively:

> 'All you can do is destroy a village without knowing anything about its people or its history, without wanting to know. Just like that. Like a mad bull. What do you understand? Fucking and killing, that's what you understand. And soccer. And shares in the big cooperative. You're a wild animal, not a human being.'

Thus Nahum, the medical orderly, to Itcheh, the young warrior and hero of the border raids. But a moment later Nahum is trembling in fear, his enlightened humanity affording no more protection against the night terrors than Itcheh's animal courage.

Oz is without doubt a voice for sanity, for the powers of imagination and love, and for understanding. He is also a writer of marvellous comic and lyric gifts, which somehow communicate themselves as naturally in English as in Hebrew – a tribute to the translators, who work closely with the author. Those who prefer realism in fiction may find that the final story, a retelling of the Biblical tale of Jephthah's daughter, suffers from an excessively self-conscious style and symbolism. But the stories on the whole show remarkable artistry and control and demonstrate the born story-teller's gift of creating characters who are at once inevitable and familiar, instantly recognizable and larger than life. The reader coming to Oz for the first time is likely to find his perception of Israel permanently altered and shaped by these tales.

To the Other

If you had understood my heart,
You would have left me, like the others, years ago
But fidelity made you stupid and you stayed.

It is not that you are not cruel sometimes
But that your cruelty is so marvellously dumb
I can listen to it, roll after roll, savour it even

As if you were some sustained Roman Orator
As if the person you were condemning so bitterly
Was not and could never have been me.

How you go on sometimes! Especially in summer
When something in the hot and fading air
Sends you crazy for improvement! Crazy to change

All my nerves and yours into air and fire!
Crazy to chuck your weeds and play Cleopatra!
Crazy to catch the world in those strong coils of grace!

I turn up the music so I have something to listen to
(What else could a sane person do?)
Let you hit those high c's of despair, again and again.

Andrew Harvey

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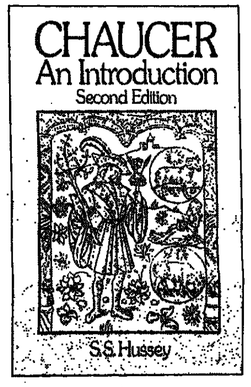
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Palmy days in Piccadilly

By Doris Langley Moore

T. A. J. BURNETT:
The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy
The Life and Times of Scrope Berdmore Davies
256pp. John Murray. £9.50.
0 7195 3864 5

The existence of this book provides a rare example of a good deed shining in a naughty world. It offers us a buried treasure about which, when it is brought to light, all the people concerned behave sensibly and even altruistically. Here is a reminder of the tale.

During alterations to the premises of Barclay's Bank at No 1 Pall Mall East, a search reveals an ancient private deposit vault containing a large number of old deed boxes and trunks. Mr Norman-Butler, the local director, requests the bank's archivist to come and open only those that have been on deposit more than a hundred years. When these gentlemen see the name *Scrope Davies* on a brass-studded trunk, they recognize it at once as belonging to a friend of Byron. Would every bank have such literate directors?

"We thought we might be on to something good", says Mr Norman-Butler, and when they confirm that they are on to something very good indeed, they immediately inform the Secretary of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Most of us would not even know where to find him. This accomplished Secretary, a Mr Davis, most perceptively suggests that the bank should get in touch with Mr John Murray, successor to the foremost of Byron's publishers, accessible – as it might be that publisher himself – in the very Albemarle Street house where Byron was no infrequent visitor. The bank meanwhile is investigating records at Somerset House which disclose that Scrope Davies, a bachelor, died intestate and the heiress of what he had to leave had been his sister. If anyone has a right to this marvellous hoard of letters and documents deposited in 1820, it must be collateral descendants, but who and where are they? Until this point is cleared up the great find must be kept in the dark lest claimants appear on all sides, the mere monetary value (if there is anything "mere" about monetary value) being immense.

Mr Murray recollects the boast of his diligent author, the present writer, that she never forgets a fact relating to Byron. Across his impressive desk, enjoining discretion, he puts the question, "Do you know if there is any surviving kinsman of Scrope Davies?" She replies: "Bevis Hillier told me he was one". Mr Murray is delighted, for he is very well acquainted with Bevis Hillier, who is writing a book for him. He quietly gets in touch with him, and between Mr Hillier and the bank's solicitor, they track down another collateral descendant, Mr Martin Davies, who happens to be a genealogist and very knowledgeable about his ancestors. Mr Norman-Butler (descendant of Thackeray) writes to both of these gentlemen announcing "the most important discovery of literary documents . . . a mass of correspondence from Lord Byron, Thomas Moore, John Cam Hobhouse, Charles Skinner Matthews, Augusta Leigh, etc", together with substantial manuscripts of works by Byron and Shelley.

No one who has any information of the discovery breaks the seal of confidence. Besides Messrs Hillier and Davies, the legal representative of Byron's estate, Mr Murray, might also put in a claim, but they all decide on renunciation. The trunk is taken to the British Library in a horse-drawn carriage and received by Lord Eccles, the Chairman of the Library Board, and on December 10, 1976, *The Times* is able to give the story front-page prominence and to create a sensation not confined to literary circles. The British Museum holds an exhibition of the principal items, and T. A. J. Burnett, one of the Library scholars, gets to work on the preliminaries of publication.

All this is told by Mr Hillier in his foreword to this truly enthralling book, the author of which has threaded his way through mazes of research to give a picture not only of Scrope Davies but of the gambling smart set in Regency London.

The first chapter, recounting Scrope's beginnings, is not without a painful element. To become a Colleger at Eton when eleven years old was a fate which could bear comparison with being consigned to Dotheboys Hall. In Scrope's time all were crowded into one long, comfortless, dirty dormitory from eight at night, when they were locked in without supervision, till seven next morning. Considering that they depended on candles for light and had to contrive their own candlesticks – usually out of old book covers, the author tells us – it was wonderful that there was no lethal fire. "The total lack of privacy, combined with the want of control, not only meant that study was virtually impossible, but also resulted in cruel bullying and sexual malpractices . . . The College provided no breakfast and no tea while dinner invariably consisted of roast mutton and mashed potatoes . . ." The supply even of this monotonous fare was meagre, and the smaller boys got little but bread dipped in cold gravy and, for beverage, miserably distasteful beer. Hunting rats was one of the sports of the dormitory; fighting, gambling and drinking helped to fill the time of the evening incarceration, the drink being pushed through the bars of a window by a potboy from the local inn.

The reason why Scrope was subjected to these grim conditions – under the rule of two of the most famous flogging masters in public-school history – was that Collegers alone could eventually become eligible for a Fellowship at King's College, and Scrope was the son of a country clergyman with ten children. A Fellowship could set him up for life, but to gain it was not so much a matter of learning – though he was a gifted classical scholar – as of competing successfully in an obstacle race of antiquated traditions which, even after Mr Burnett has described them, remain somewhat mysterious. There was an element of chance about them, and Scrope very nearly reached the age of superannuation, nineteen, before luck favoured him. He left Eton in July 1902, the year after Byron was admitted to Harrow.

"Eton", Mr Burnett considers, "turned the simple clergyman's son into a dandy and a scholar with the entrée to the grandest drawing rooms in London. At the same time it made him a gambler, a drunkard, and a spendthrift who ended his days in ruin".

Scrope must have been more sentimental than his friends suspected, for he kept in that now famous trunk some of his schoolboy souvenirs, including bills and receipts which, interesting as they are today to students of old customs and currency, could have had no value for their owner unless, when he became a senior boy and the College dandy, there were compensations for past hardship that evoked a lingering fondness.

Byron met Scrope at Cambridge in 1807 and was soon part of the coterie of which Scrope was deemed the wittiest and Matthews the most brilliant, with Hobhouse and Kinnaird both talented and obviously destined for public life. Byron that year published *Hours of Idleness*. Scrope, the oldest by several years, was already a near-incorrigible drinker and gambler, but in great demand for the sake of his company. They were all clever young men and, like clever young men in every period who aspire to be men of the world as well, they were flippant and sometimes malicious, even at the expense of one another. Their deeds and not their words are the test of their friendship.

Scrope was a dandy and Byron inclined to dandyism too, no doubt, as the author conjectures, under Scrope's influence, the latter having five years' more experience of the world. A dandy specialized in a certain social insolence. He had abandoned the last trace of eighteenth-century exuberance in dress, yet wore clothes still more eloquent of idleness. His coat was dark blue, chestnut, or plum-coloured, but he showed his membership of the leisured classes by pantaloons of palest grey or cream, spotless linen constantly changed, and kid gloves which, being white, lemon, or lavender, were soiled in a few hours. To be a dandy required "an arrogance discernible only to the cognoscenti. To attract attention by one's dress was the supreme mortification." Byron was right to remember himself as having "given up the business" of dandyism early. By the age of twenty-four he was acquiring huge bills for sable-trimmed pelisses and quantities of quilted waistcoats. He could not affect the coolness that is essential to the dandy attitude, and his burning creativeness was itself an invincible obstacle.

Dandies could gamble, drive smart little carriages, indulge in sports and games such as royal tennis (Scrope was extremely good at that), attend dinner and supper parties to any extent and be seen at balls and theatres, but they must not have any obsessive private occupation nor love affairs of a distracting kind. George Brummell is believed to have lived a celibate life. Scrope dispassionately had mistresses. The respectable Hobhouse, tortured by shyness with ladies, sought out women of the town whose price might be as low as a shilling or as high, on one occasion only, as £1 5*s*. Kinnaird kept a lady who sang and through her Byron was to write the Hebrew Melodies set to music by Nathan. Matthews was homosexual.

That was a hanging matter if he acted upon the inclination, and we cannot know whether he did or not, but his letters show that he encouraged Byron – though not until he was departing for the East, where it carried no criminal stigma. It is very probable that all the friends were in one another's confidence about their respective proclivities and were tolerant. When Matthews was drowned, both Byron and Scrope recognized that Hobhouse had loved him intensely and would be more stricken with grief even than they were, but neither of them ever voiced the smallest suspicion of a physical side to the affection; which Hobhouse transferred in time to Byron, to whom he was a jealous and possessive friend but assuredly not a lover. I find it regrettable that, nowadays, one cannot write of the attachment of two men without having to speculate on its possible sexual aspect.

Scrope, who was gay only in the true lively sense of the word, had a tendency to find attraction in women Byron had made love to first. Mr Burnett instances Lady Caroline Lamb, Lady Oxford, and Lady Frances Webster. He might perhaps have added Augusta Leigh. At any rate she was on far warmer terms with him than any other members of Byron's "Piccadilly crew", and he remained in touch with her after leaving England.

In the "Anthology" of the contents of the trunk – and I could wish the selection had been alluded to as such and not as if it were to be found in some other volume – there are two letters from Lady Frances to Scrope which make one understand as never before why Byron "spared her". Caroline at her most melodramatic was nothing to this frenzied beauty (Scrope said she was the only person he ever beheld who had everything the eye looks for in a woman). She appears to have learned her style from all the worst female novelists of the age, and may, I imagine, have been one of the rare readers of Shelley's adolescent *Zastrozzi*. Evidently, to begin with, Scrope too had spared her, for she wrote to him in 1818, "Oh God! Oh God! Oh God! Heaven bless you – you have preserved me from agonies of Guilt – my Child may now look upon me without a blush – Remember my life is in your hands. Farewell! I am going I know not where – I shall go to the Theatre . . . I give you my hair, torn from my head . . .".

There were twenty-one such outpourings to Scrope in 1818 and 1819, all found in the trunk. Earlier she had had a similar passage with the Duke of Wellington, and Thomas Moore was pretty sure *he* had not spared her. The first credible portrait I have seen of her is reproduced in this book. It is very soulful and her dress pure Regency Gothic.

We have an idea of Lady Frances's appearance, but alas! not of Scrope's. No portrait is known. There was a miniature of him by Holmes expressly painted for Byron. It was sold at Christie's on December 5, 1906, but its present whereabouts has evaded even Mr Burnett's vigilance. What a delight it would be to find it so that it might grace the next edition of this unique book!

If there is one chapter that fails in places to hold the attention, it is that in which the author endeavours to describe what has so often been described before, the Byron Separation, in which Scrope and Hobhouse took part with little success as mediators. It is too intricate a drama to be reduced to a few densely packed pages, and the need for compression results in some injustice to Byron. His insistence, for example, on leaving for the future the question of his share in his wife's entailed estate should have been balanced by some account of his having made a marriage settlement far beyond his means and the inability of Lady Byron's father to pay more than the interest on her dowry. This was a topic on which she was always disingenuous, letting it be inferred that he had got a fortune with her and spent it – "to the utmost shilling" as her friend Harriet Martineau stated in the *Daily News* obituary of 1860. Of course the author is concerned to show how staunch and level-headed Scrope could be on a friend's behalf, but then he rather cancels out that impression by quoting his very disloyal remarks about Byron when discussing him with Gronow in later years.

For all his intelligence, taste, and social vivacity, Scrope could not evade the nemesis whose pursuit of all inveterate gamblers is relentless. Yet his full had not the sordid sadness of Brummell's. The King's Fellowship supported the modest and careful comfort of his life on the other side of the Channel. He prolonged it by reducing his heavy drinking, and was still a welcome dinner guest among English visitors, though tending as the years ran on to repeat too many anecdotes about the personalities with whom he had shared his palmy days – personalities now extinguished by death, like Byron and Kinnaird, or grown into sober and responsible statesmen, like Hobhouse. In long exile, he became "a neat little old gentleman" and, at the end, "an old man shrivelled and bent," descending secretly on long-lost London.

This volume gives us, besides Scrope's absorbing biography, a catalogue of the varied contents of his trunk, a number of the letters found in it, and two previously unpublished sonnets by Shelley, as well as some well-chosen illustrations. At £9.50 it is the literary bargain of the season. The price could not have been kept so low without a subsidy, on which I venture to congratulate my bank – none other than Barclay's.

F. Lewis (The Tithe House, 146 London Road, Leigh-on-Sea) has recently published *Edwin Cooper of Beccles 1785-1833* (104pp, with 342 black and white reproductions. £18.50. 0 85317 065 7), a monograph by Desmond Taylor on the long-neglected East Anglian cartoonist and painter of horses, dogs and other animals. Taylor, who provides a complete illustrated catalogue of all Cooper's known works, believes that the artist's depiction of equine subjects, particularly during the latter years of his life, was often on a par with that of George Stubbs.

Images in illustration

By Edwin Morgan

Landscape Poets: Thomas Hardy
Selected and edited by Peter Porter
128pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £5.95.
0 297 77992 3

Landscape Poets: Robert Burns
Selected and edited by Karl Miller
128pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £5.95.
0 297 77991 5

Too small for coffee-table books – perhaps they are bedside books? Whatever their function, these handsomely produced volumes each contains about sixty pages of poetry and forty pages of photographs. The photographs are gathered in sections of eight, and do not in general "illustrate" individual poems, being intended rather as a series of evocative visual reminders of the poet's environment. As Peter Porter points out, in his introduction to a good selection of Hardy's poems, the photographer's part in the operation is not easy, partly because much of the physical appearance of the long-dead poet's world will have changed or simply vanished, but more importantly, because "the relationship between imaginative art and the reality from which it springs is never a simple one; nor has it outstanding lineaments just waiting to be shown". What the camera can catch, however, is "the flow of sympathy and its opposite, the menace of nature, which is still mysteriously there in the Hardy country".

On the whole, the photographs bear this out. There is a view of Boscastle harbour which bears little direct relation to the poem "At Castle Boterel" included in the selection, but it is useful to see what Boscastle is like, and to imagine, if one wishes, what Hardy has done with the place in the changed world of the poem. But some of the most effective photographs merely show "a crossroads in the West Country", "a Somerset smallholder at his back door", "marshlands near Salisbury", "a stone wall on Salisbury Plain", or "a Cornish lane". Occasionally a juxtaposition gives a nice jolt of surprise: "Yonder a maid and her wight / Come whispering by: / War's annals will cloud into night / Ere their story die" faces the Cerne Abbas giant, thoroughly erect and certainly not whispering. If there is anything lacking in the photographs, it is the sense of a rich, warm, seasonal and often ritualistic communal life, some sort of visual accompaniment of the lines:

> Who is this coming with pondering pace,
> Black and ruddy, with white embossed,
> His eyes being black, and ruddy his face,
> And the marge of his hair like morning frost?
>
> It's the cider-maker,
> And appletree-shaker,
> And behind him on wheels, in readiness,
> His mill, and tubs, and vat, and press.

Hardy must have seemed a natural choice for a series of "Landscape Poets", even though his most powerful, extended and photographable landscape effects come in his novels and not in his poems. Burns, however, would need a very hard case to be made for him as a "landscape poet" at all, and Karl Miller in his introduction, and even in his choice of poems, scarcely makes the attempt. As he rightly says, the interests and themes of Burns's poetry – among which he identifies particularly "poetry, sociability and sexual adventure" – seem to commemorate the very things tht would most help him, when he began writing, to "face the prospect of a lifetime's hard labour on the land". His problems as a poet, confronted as they were with extraordinary confidence and dash, concerned the range of traditions, both Scottish and English, to which he might relate himself. Miller makes the point that his use of Scots was not merely patriotic, but in its intense identification with a peasant community, had strong class-motivation as well. In expanding this argument he takes up more debatable ground, going out of his way to deny that Burns was really bilingual, to remind us that the market for popular songs was an all-British one, and finally, because "questions of class can be mistaken for questions of nationality", to upbraid Scottish Nationalism for encouraging and exploiting this mistake. These sentiments will not be universally popular north of the Cheviots, and it is very hard to believe that Burns himself would underwrite them. The raising of such issues, however, gives the introduction substance.

There seems to have been no liaison between Miller and his photographer, and the result is a very curious book. Only about a quarter of the photographs show the Ayrshire countryside which was Burns's "Wessex", in so far as any landscape was; these are eked out, superfluously and not even very interestingly, by many views of the Highlands (visited by Burns as a tourist but of little importance to his poetry) and by shots of manuscripts, pictures, glasses, pistol, writing-desk, bed, bust, statue, kettles, fire-irons, and other personal and domestic relics (good enough photographs, but irrelevant to the theme of the book).

Perhaps everyone just gave up, recognizing the fact that Burns is more concerned with men and women than with places. Karl Miller's selection tacitly admits this, strongly emphasizing the poet's racy verse-epistles to his friends, though including "Tam o' Shanter", "To a Mouse", "The Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation", and other poems where landscape does now and again make itself felt. If there is one thing which distinguishes Burns when he uses landscape, it is his references to winter, to storms, snowdrifts and cold, as can be seen in many of the poems here; that the photographs reflect nothing of this is an indication of how little this volume has been thought out.

Who will come next in the series – Wordsworth? Hopkins? Clare? Spenser? Tennyson? Even to consider the possibilities is to open up a number of searching questions about the relation of poetry to images outside itself. "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling . . .": "I cannot paint/ What then I was . . .": "Words cannot picture her . . .": There has never been any shortage of evidence to show that poets often fall into the habit of thinking of themselves as image-makers, and of their work as having analogies to painting or sculpture. The fact in itself does not take us very far, as the expression of it may be no more than conventional, and because in any case poetry contains so many things other than images – syntax, sound-effects, metre and rhythm. Wordsworth cannot paint what then he was but neither could a painter, since the aim is to re-create and describe a remembered mental state, one of extreme receptivity to the sights and sounds of nature, a state referred to as a "passion", an "appetite", a "feeling", a "love", with "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures"; yet he claims, as a painter might well claim, that all this excitement was generated without "any interest / Unborrowed from the eye", though this is really Wordsworth's way of saying that the landscapes were not poetically useful to him at the time, only years later, when recollection had transformed them.

In this example, there is nothing that painter or photographer can usefully add to the poetry. When James (B.V.) Thomson, however, saying (in *The City of Dreadful Night*) "Words cannot picture her", goes on to delineate in some detail the figure of Melancolia in Dürer's famous engraving of that title –

> Words cannot picture her; but all men know
> That solemn sketch the pure and subtle thought
> Three centuries and threescore years ago,
> With phantasies of his peculiar art:
> The instruments of carpentry and science
> Scattered about her feet, in strange alliance
> With the keen wolf-hound sleeping undistraught . . .

– there would be a good case for including a reproduction of Dürer's picture in an edition of the poem, all the more so as the first "her" refers not to Dürer's original Melancolia but to a colossal bronze statue of her, projected into a third dimension and erected on a northern ridge of the nightmare city. In the same way, there seems no good reason, beyond modern editorial purism, why Hart Crane's "The Bridge" and Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman" should not carry a picture of Brooklyn Bridge and of the statue of Peter the Great with which the two poems are quite specifically concerned. *A fortiori*, "casebooks" and "reader's guides" on Eliot's *Four Quartets* which have no pictures of Burnt Norton, East Coker, the Dry Salvages, and Little Gidding, miss something which was important to Eliot himself, and ought to be to his readers. Illustrations after the event – Blake's Dante, John Martin's "Paradise Lost", Gustave Doré's "The Raven", Charles Demuth's "I saw the Figure 5 in Gold" after William Carlos Williams's "The Great Figure" – are perhaps more indulgent, yet in all these instances the severity of modern taste cuts itself off from something imaginative and (used with care) illuminating.

The idea of combining poetry with visual images is very old, and has resurfaced periodically under different conventions and dedicated to different ends. The Emblem Books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended, under a cloak of moral didacticism, to feed a taste for riddle and enigma, suggestion and counter-suggestion, sub-text under sub-text. (I offer the metaphor of "feeding" under a "cloak" as a characteristic challenge to the illustrator.) The complex structure of motto plus picture plus poem, with the picture perhaps itself containing a further motto, and more than one language being commonly used, meant that the appeal of the emblem was "hieroglyphic" rather in the sense of adumbrating mysteries than of presenting didactic texts. George Wither's emblem on the dangers of loose tongues has the motto

> No heart can think, to what strange ends,
> The tongue's unruly motion tends.

The poem appears to be a straightforward listing of such evils as lying, swearing, slander, rumour-mongering, and blabbing of secrets. But what catches the attention is the remarkable circular picture of a winged tongue which is in the process of mounting up from the raised foreground and spreading broadly over a landscape of field and village and two hurrying figures who are either busy spreading gossip or fleeing from some rumour of catastrophe. The picture has a Latin motto to round the edge: *Lingua quo tendis?* Where indeed? The extraordinary reptilian tongue, a creature with its own volition, is twisting upwards from earth to sky, combining in itself an elegant confidence and vitality of movement with a truly sinister absence of eyes, ears or mouth at its head end. A return to the poem will probably bring other lines into prominence:

> To speak of things unknown it taketh leave,
> As if it had all knowledge in possession;
> And mysteries (which no man can conceive)
> Are thought fit objects for the tongue's expression.

The poet lets the picture, and the English and Latin mottoes, work against the simple "watch your tongue" moralizing in the main part of the poem, by emphasizing strangeness and power; the dutiful moralizer becomes also Duke Theseus, who watches the imagination bodying forth the forms of things unknown.

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the author, is a collection of children's poems which delight in both using and mocking the expected didactics of the genre. Here, the pictures are straight illustrations, but the joy of trying his hand at wood engraving, and the quick, vivid, rough, popular illustrative style he found, seem to have educed a lively and wicked spirit in the verse. The thoughtful child might cut its teeth on "A Peak in Darien":

> Broad-gazing on untrodden lands,
> See where adventurous Cortez stands:
> While in the heavens above his head,
> The Eagle seeks its daily bread.
> How aptly fact to fact replies:
> Heroes and Eagles, hills and skies.
> Ye, who contemn the fatted slave,
> Look on this emblem and be brave.

More recently, the *Heroic Emblems* of Ian Hamilton Finlay have reopened the wider and more serious implications of the genre in an unexpected way. These are emblems without accompanying verse; the verse, the poetry, has got into the emblem itself, which is a concentrated design of words and images reverberating back and forward through iconic tradition. Both "classical" and provocatively polemical (and the former implies the latter, in Finlay's view, given today's anti-classicist assumptions), these emblems offer new currency to mottoes and images from the past. In a reincarnation of Poussin's "Et in Arcadia Ego", the stone tomb of the original is replaced by a stone monument or tomb in the shape of a tank: the motto and the woodland setting are the same, but Finlay's emphasis on modern warfare, though deliberately ambiguous, certainly tends to restore the "heroic" aspect of a motto which has gradually slipped into triviality ("I too have had my moments").

Finlay, perhaps more than anyone else, has wanted to put poetry back into a context where it will not be felt to be alien to the neighbourworlds of drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture, and through the last two of these, to the world of the natural environment itself. His garden at Stonypath is a living, three-dimensional assault on what Stephen Bann has called "the taboo between visual and verbal matter". Thus, "The Great Piece of Turf" is an environmental inscription-poem, with a title after one of Dürer's watercolours, which isolates a raft of turf and flowers and sets on it a stone slab carved with the AD monogram Dürer used in his paintings. The subtle interplay between past and present, between two-dimensional painting and three-dimensional sculpture, between the fixed eternity of painted grasses and the provisional pleasure of growing species, between Stonypath and photographs of Stonypath, leaves no shortage of problems for critics, but they are problems that the quality of the work prods us to consider. Finlay's own problem is that there is only one of Stonypath, and unless Mark Boyle can clone it all in fibreglass, knowledge about it has to rely largely on photographers. What photographers can do for, or to, poetry, is the subject that started off these speculations, and it may now be returned to in a broader consideration.

The poem and the photograph have so far proved to be uneasy bedfellows. Thom Gunn's *Positives* (1966), a series of untitled poems written to accompany a collection of urban photographs by his brother Ander, gave the impression of an exercise decently and respectably carried out: jottings of how people live in modern cities, from babyhood to senility. But the real Gunn, a sinewy, forceful and sometimes difficult poet, seemed largely absent, held in check by photographs which, with two or three exceptions, were not particularly interesting. Ted Hughes's *Remains of Elmet* (1979), poems written to photographs by Fay Godwin, is highly praised by Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts in their recent critical study of Hughes, and it is certainly working on a deeper level than *Positives*, yet there seems to be a strange disjunction between the dark, empty, brooding melancholy of the photographs of fields, moors, rocks and ruins and the jagged, tormented, hammering short lines of the poems. There is, in any case, a central misconception about the book. In his prefatory note Ted Hughes explains how the old Celtic kingdom of Elmet, west of Halifax, first boomed and then declined as a result of the Industrial Revolution. With the textile mills now almost dead, "the population of the valley and hillsides, so rooted for so long, is changing rapidly". He does not say the population has vanished, but that is how Fay Godwin has interpreted it. Out of sixty-three photographs, only four show human beings, though the reader's eye will have noticed some shots of villages with sturdily smoking chimneys. Where are the people who live there? In what ways are they "changing rapidly"?

The sense of time, decay, and the revolutions of empires which pervades Allen Ginsberg's journal-poem *Ankor Wat* (1968) was neatly but rather repetitively underlined by Alexandra Lawrence's photographs of temples clutched by re-encroaching jungle. Ankor Wat photographs, however good, have become something of a cliché, and the poem, though actually written within sight of the ruins, takes off in so many other directions that the pictures seem constricting. William Webb's photographs in Ginsberg's *Bixby Canyon Ocean Path Word Breeze* (1972) nicely pick out a few details from the poem, but in their black and white they have a strong rival on the cover, which reproduces in colour a more immediately attractive painting of Bixby Canyon by Emil White.

The more adventurous photomontage of Aleksandr Rodchenko produced brilliant illustrations of Mayakovsky's *Pro Eto* (1923). Here, the equal creativity of poet and illustrator gives the whole book an imaginative life in which one turns from text to picture and from picture to text with little sense of awkwardness or diminution. Later attempts at photomontage have lacked the élan of the constructivist 1920s, but Kirby Congdon's *Juggernaut* (1966) is worth mentioning – a folder of broadsides on "sex, violence, death, in American sports and entertainment" where strong photographic juxtapositions illustrate but rather browbeat the poems.

If there is any single message that emerges from these various examples, it is that black-and-white photography has obvious limitations when used in conjunction with poetry. The dark, and for the most part depressing, images in *Remains of Elmet* and *Positives* have no better result than to make the reader reluctant to open these books again, having once gone through them and given them their chance. By contrast, the coloured facsimile paperback of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* published by Oxford University Press in 1970 is a treasury of delights, which one can pore over again and again with instructive and revelatory pleasure. Can nothing be done to change the gloomy chromatophobia of the art photographer? Almost all amateur photography is in colour; almost all cinema and TV and video are in colour; the world is in colour; Mars is red, Saturn is golden. Yet exhibitions of photography are still generally in black and white, with a little concessionary ghetto marked "Colour Section". I think it is time for art photographers to follow boldly where artists and science photographers have gone before. And I put it to the publishers of the "Landscape Poets" series that if they employed a black-and-white photographer to illustrate the work of Hopkins or Spenser, with its innumerable colour references, he would be wasting his time.



"Leo", a cartoon for stained glass in the north clerestorey of Cork Cathedral by William Burges (1827-1881), included in the centenary exhibition, "The Strange Genius of William Burges", currently at the National Museum of Wales, and the Victoria and Albert Museum from November 18 to January 1982. The catalogue is edited by J. Mordaunt Crook (155pp. National Museum of Wales, £2.95. 0 7200 0234 6); his book William Burges and the High Victorian Dream *was reviewed in the* TLS *recently.*

Those who sit and watch

By N. B. Davies

DAVID McFARLAND (Editor):
The Oxford Companion to Animal Behaviour
657pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0 19 866120 7

It is now exactly thirty years since Niko Tinbergen, one of the founders of ethology, wrote *The Study of Instinct*, the first major book on the scientific study of animal behaviour. At that time students of behaviour were more or less divided into two groups. On the one hand there were psychologists, who experimented in the laboratory with rats and pigeons, while at the other extreme fieldworkers explored the countryside with butterfly-nets and binoculars, observing animals in their natural environment.

Tinbergen showed clearly how both approaches were necessary for a full understanding of animal behaviour. Whenever we watch an animal and ask why is it behaving as it is, there are several different kinds of answer to our question. We could, for example, ask why swallows migrate south to Africa in the autumn. One answer would be in terms of the internal factors and external cues which cause the birds to migrate. This might describe the influence of day length or temperature on the nervous system and hormone levels in the bird's body and how these trigger off the migration. A second answer would be concerned with the development of behaviour in the individual. How do innate rules and experience interact to determine the migratory behaviour? Yet another answer would consider the adaptive nature of the migratory habit – how it contributes to the ability of the swallow to survive and breed.

Ethologists are interested in all these kinds of answer and so animal behaviour is a broad field of inquiry encompassing methods ranging from physiological and psychological experiments to bird-watching. Since Tinbergen's pioneering book there has been an enormous increase in research and teaching programmes in ethology and many of the exciting discoveries that have been made have been reported in the popular press and on television. Most of us will have heard the haunting song of the humpback whale, or seen films of the honey-bee's dance or the use of sign language by chimpanzees.

The *Oxford Companion to Animal Behaviour*, edited by David McFarland, Tinbergen's successor as Reader in Ethology at Oxford, provides an excellent handbook for the layman who wants to know more about its underlying ideas and methods. Articles by a team of seventy authors are arranged alphabetically and cover a wide variety of subjects, from aggression, communication, displays, evolution and learning to parental care, play and social relationships. The writing is clear, avoiding unnecessary scientific jargon, and the book is illustrated with numerous line drawings by Tim Halliday which not only decorate the text in a felicitous style but also portray clearly and accurately examples of animal behaviour. There are several articles on topics closely related to behaviour studies, such as colour vision, household pets and wildlife management, descriptions of techniques of study and short biographies of pioneer ethologists, including Darwin, Lorenz, von Frisch, Pavlov and Tinbergen.

The main articles are often several pages in length and will provide substantial and authoritative accounts not only for the layman but also for those who study animals professionally. As well as a serious work of reference, the book is also fun to browse through. I was fascinated to discover that the shrew never sleeps while the sloth does so for twenty hours each day. In an article on "boredom" we learn that cows are less likely to get bored than pigs, and under "hypnosis" there is a drawing of a chicken lying mesmerized beneath a stuffed hawk!

It is interesting to reflect on how the image of the ethologist has changed since the days of the naturalist perched on top of a sand-dune with binoculars and notebook. The modern researcher is armed with a cine-camera and automatic event recorder which feeds data directly into a computer for analysis. More often than not he is concerned with problems rather than species descriptions; he is interested in the economics of decision-making rather than the behaviour of the herring-gull for its own sake. The new approach has led to a more rigorous description and quantification of behaviour and has shown also the generality of simple models. We can, for example, use the same ideas to predict how long a blackbird should remain at each blackberry-bush in order to maximize its harvest from a field, and to predict how long a male dungfly should mate with a female on a cow-pat. Although feeding and mating are obviously different kinds of behaviour, both these examples involve the problem of how best to exploit a depleting resource – the longer the bird feeds on the same bush the lower its rate of food intake and the longer the male dungfly copulates the lower its rate of fertilizing eggs. Both animals are faced with the same decision, namely when to give up and move on.

We should, however, heed Tinbergen's words of advice before plunging prematurely into the details of quantification. It is the good naturalist who best realizes the complexity of an animal's relationships with its environment and how little of this complexity we really understand. Perhaps one of the main messages of *The Oxford Companion* is that there is still a major role to be played by those who still patiently sit and watch.

Focus on Nature, by Gerald Thompson and Oxford Scientific Films, and with a foreword by David Attenborough, has just been published (184pp. Faber and Faber. £12.50. 0 571 11810 0). It combines detailed discussion of the technicalities of the photography of natural phenomena with an extraordinarily beautiful series of photographs. Many of the pictures are of things and instants that can never be observed by the human eye. Some happen too fast – we are shown 1/25,000 of a second in the life of the leopard frog, just launched upon its leap at 90 kilometres per hour. Others are too small – two *paramecia*, ciliated protozoans, are shown "swapping nuclear material".

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Goods and practices

By Philippa Foot

ALASDAIR MacINTYRE:
After Virtue
A study in moral theory.
252pp. Duckworth. £24.
0 7156 1045 7

The theme of Alasdair MacIntyre's pervasively nostalgic book is the enfeebled state of modern moral consciousness. He sighs for the "coherence" of earlier moral thinking, for moral consensus, tradition, locality, community, and social authority. He is scornful of the individualism at the centre of "modernism" (his special target) and where others might find signs of a healthy moral outlook, as in political protest on behalf of human rights, he hears the "shrill" voice of modern moral uncertainty.

All this will sound familiar, but MacIntyre is in fact an idiosyncratic philosopher and sociologist with a special thesis of his own. He believes the language of present-day moral judgement to be literally unintelligible because it largely consists of remnants of ancient cultures to which the "fictions" of natural rights and of utility have been added in the intervening centuries. So we talk as if there were objective impersonal standards of right and wrong and as if moral disputes could in principle be settled. But we have long since lost an essential element in objective morality which is the idea of a human *telos* – an end for which all men have reason to strive. In thus moving away from basically Aristotelian morality we have debarred ourselves from finding a rational basis for moral action, and confusion has been compounded by the shift from a morality in which virtues were central to one dominated by rules. We have inherited our vocabulary from a very different past: it is one that we no longer understand and which indeed makes no sense in its new context.

Once Aristotle had been abandoned, attempts to find objective moral standards and impersonal reasons for moral action had to fail. MacIntyre supports his thesis by showing how Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, the Utilitarians and G. E. Moore all retreated or came to grief. Tracing the history of moral theory he insists also on the social consequences of the rise of individualism and the growing incoherence of moral thought. As theory faltered practice changed too, and we find the roots of the problems engaging academic moralists and those met in practical social life to be the same. Lacking a firm belief in rationally chosen ends we have come to over-value managerial skills which are supposed to adjust means to given ends. Thus Weber, whom MacIntyre calls an emotivist, is the prophet of the modern age; and analysis of managerial theory and practice by his critics has actually tended to confirm this thesis. Control, of motives and behaviour, is the criterion of bureaucratic success, and the justification of managerial power has to lie in a claim to the possession of a body of "social scientific knowledge" containing universal law-like generalizations, a claim which incidentally MacIntyre himself denies. Such are the effects of moral subjectivism on the power structure of the modern world. Its private-life counterpart has been described by Erving Goffman in his portrayal of the role-playing individual.

The goal of the Goffmanesque role-player is effectiveness and success in Goffman's social universe is nothing but what passes for success. There is nothing else for it to be. For Goffman's world is empty of objective standards of achievement; it is so defined that there is no cultural or social space from which appeal to such standards could be made.

Such is MacIntyre's gloomy picture of present-day moral language and its social consequences. What of the future? Is there any gleam of hope? Surprisingly it seems that there is. For it was the rejection of Aristotle that sent things awry and MacIntyre believes that a revised Aristotelianism will allow us to reinstate the virtues and to send moral subjectivism packing. Perhaps it will also give us encouragement to construct "local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us". Aristotle's own moral system was defective because he tried to derive the end-for-man from his metaphysical biology. We are told, however, that a clear and more defensible account can be given of the human *telos*.

The final chapters of *After Virtue* tell us what the new Aristotelianism is to be like. MacIntyre has always argued for the historical study of moral concepts, and he spends time in this book on the changing idea of a virtue. Nevertheless he believes that there is a core concept common to the different phases of Greek culture and extending to modern times. A preliminary account of this concept is supposed to show that virtues have "their point and function" in what he calls "practices".

Practices have a bewildering number of defining characteristics, but their most important features seem to be that they are cooperative activities (whatever exactly that means here) and that the goods realized by them are internal to the activities concerned. By this latter description MacIntyre is marking the distinction between ends such as power or wealth which could in theory at least be gained in more than one way, and goods that cannot even be characterized apart from the activity from which they arise. He seems to be thinking chiefly of such things as playing chess and practising the arts, and does not tell us enough to make it clear why farming is said to be a practice. What have practices to do with the definition of the virtues? It appears that these can be defined in a preliminary way as qualities necessary to the achievement of goods internal to practices.

MacIntyre has clearly been much struck by the fact that someone who wants to acquire the peculiar good of playing chess well will not simply want to win by whatever means, and will listen to what others have to tell him about how to play. What is not so clear, however, is how he thinks this is going to help him to rout the moral subjectivist or sceptic, who need not question the possibility of a subsidiary place for virtues such as courage and patience, and even a modicum of fairness, in the life of any man. The problem posed by Plato, and never solved, is that of showing the rationality, for any man, of a thorough-going acceptance of the restraints of justice. MacIntyre seems to think he can do something with the thought that the funding and maintaining of communities is a practice in which men may together seek for the "good for man". But supposing such practices to aim at the good of the many and not necessarily at the ends of the individual, it is against them that we are warned by Plato's Thrasymuchus and Callicles and by Nietzsche.

MacIntyre evades such challenges by the use of expressions such as "common goods"; his opponents will ruthlessly unpack the bundle and while MacIntyre will no doubt insist that the good of the individual and his rational ends cannot be achieved except through respect for others this is just what his critics will deny. Nor are they likely to be impressed by his account of the good for man, an account which is supposed to supplement that knowledge of the virtues which comes from understanding the part they play in practices. For the good for man turns out to lie in the unity ("the narrative unity") of a life devoted to a search for the good for man.

MacIntyre evades some of his opponents; he does, however, engineer a confrontation of a kind with Nietzsche, whom he regards as the most candid and clear-sighted critic of the Enlightenment's ill-fated attempts to shore up non-Aristotelian morality. Only an understanding of goods internal to practices, and a new vision of the good for man, stands between us and Nietzsche's insistence on non-rational will as the foundation of value. MacIntyre believes that by producing a new and defensible Aristotelianism he has defeated Nietzsche. He thinks he has also shown that the individual is not his own moral authority as Nietzsche believes, since "the conception of a good has to be expounded in terms of such actions as those of a practice, of the narrative unity of a human life and of a moral tradition". As a claim to have given some general account of the concept of a good this is absurd in the context of arguments actually offered in this book. Nietzsche could reply that no one knew better than he did the good of submitting to the laws of an art, and that the unity of a life was just what a strong man would create by the disciplining of his desires. But as for entering into "relationships mediated by appeal to shared standards or virtues or goods", which MacIntyre extols, these relationships will be healthy between equals but not between the strong and the weak, the exceptional and the mediocre. If morality implies accepting communal standards, so much the worse for morality.

Whether MacIntyre could develop some strong and radical theory from his present starting points is really hard to tell on the evidence offered in this book. For although he says many true things he is here basically operating on credit, while the cruel fact about philosophy is that its only currency is cash. He mentions, for instance, that he has a theory of rationality, presupposed in this work but to be expounded elsewhere. Like Ivy Compton-Burnett's horrible children we reply with an enquiry, saying, "We don't mean you haven't, we just want to know what it is."

To think that MacIntyre has failed to rescue us from our present moral discontents is not, however, either to despair of moral philosophy or to dismiss *After Virtue*. It is not to despair of moral philosophy because one may have a different perspective from MacIntyre's, thinking it to be early rather than late in the history of analytic philosophy's attempt to understand moral language and too early to claim a synoptic view of the possibilities. It is not to dismiss *After Virtue* because that would be to ignore its great merits. A reader interested primarily in finding a new moral theory may be disappointed. But if he will settle for the pleasures of intricate construction, lively argument, some excellent chapters devoted to the history of philosophy, and the skilful use of a wealth of reading in philosophy, sociology and literature he will be well served. It is only a pity that MacIntyre is too often secretive about his references. Following up some of the more recondite allusions should have been one of the pleasures of this wide-ranging book.

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GRANADA

commentary

Statues unveiled

By Frances Spalding

British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century: Part I
Whitechapel Gallery

Sculpture, even when visible in Britain, is little regarded. Once the monument has been unveiled it more often than not rapidly fades from sight. Gilbert's "Eros" in Piccadilly Circus and Thomas Brock's "Victoria Memorial" outside Buckingham Palace may be familiar but they do not enter cultural consciousness in the way that Florentine sculpture belongs to the Italians. We have a sculptural heritage but most people would be hard put to it to locate a particular rood-screen or Celtic cross or to name the artist who produced our finest equestrian monument. Much is obliterated by English philistinism, admittedly often mixed with common sense. Witness the fate of G. F. Watts's "Physical Energy" in Kensington Gardens, on which he expended years of labour and thought. A decade after his death, the *Daily Mirror* spent six weeks debating the merits of this and other statues in Hyde Park. "Let us for goodness sake keep Kensington Gardens as gardens, not as monuments or exemplifications of energy, noble or otherwise" wrote one exasperated reader. The editorial bemonned the statues' "grotesque agitation, their frozen vulgarity, their stupid lumpishness". Others hoped that German Zeppelins might rid London of much sculptural blight.

The Whitechapel Art Gallery's current exhibition counters the bored indifference normally given to British sculpture. This highly ambitious two-part event chronicles sculptural production in this country from 1900 to 1980. Part One, on show now, goes up to 1950 and includes some 200 works. They occasionally nudge one another for want of adequate viewing space, but on the whole clear grouping makes transparent the major strands and themes within this period. Because Nicholas Serota's and Sandy Nairn's selection avoids the predictable whenever possible *and* maintains high standards, this is one of those rare surveys that do not flag. It is also, surprisingly, the first of this subject.

It begins with Queen Victoria apotheosized amid swirling folds of bronze as the symbol of Empire and economic strength; a settled figure-head, mass-produced at this time for expanding industrial towns and universities. Much late Victorian sculpture is preferable in maquette, and it is the smaller pieces in the opening sections that sparkle with formal and iconographic interest. It is all highly eclectic and ither macabre; thrillingly fin-de-siècle; exoticism edging on vapidity. The mood of exaggeration and unreality is most clearly expressed in Alfred Gilbert's pursuit of linear arabesques. His "Peace leading St George" is aflutter with swallow-tailed banderole, curlicued helmet plumes and fancy-dress armour. His "St Elizabeth of Hungary" (who lied that the food for the poor hidden beneath her cloak was only roses, whereupon her cloak fell open and masses of roses fell to the ground) is semi-transmogrified into a rose-bush and studed with semi-precious gems, ivory, tin and mother-of-pearl. Gilbert, like other late Victorians, combined skilled craftsmanship with narrative flair. Much else at the start of the show besides Onslow Ford's "Sir Henry Irving as Hamlet" (gloomily presiding over the postcard desk) is ghoulishly dramatic.

The return of the use of wax in bronze casting coincided with the regular appearance of Rodin and his works in England. Their combined influence gave rise to fluent modelling; bronze is made to run and ripple like water, in the hands of Gaudier-Brzeska this plastic facility takes on greater crispness and dynamism; Picasso's sculpted cubist head of 1909 imprints a harsher note into Brzeska's head of Horace Brodsky of 1913. Brzeska and Epstein dominate the pre-1914 period. The former surpasses Epstein in sensitivity and balletic control of outline, but the latter had the more forceful and original ideas. It is good to see all three versions of his copulating doves, which gradually progress from naturalism towards geometric and hieratic rigidity. A similar stasis is found in Eric Kennington's "Soissons Memorial" maquette, with its three soldiers compressed into a tight block. It is only after the war that this tension breaks and a more humanistic attitude is released.

The section that follows gains in human interest at the expense of intellectual astringency. In a display of portraits, only Dobson's "Lydia Lopokova" really signals to the spectator. The torso becomes a fashionable subject, allowing dottiness and fetishism to come to the fore. It also caught the imagination of the young Barbara Hepworth, whose subtly inflected carving reduces it to a gleaming pillar. This section ends with a series of reclining figures at the centre of which is Henry Moore's elm-wood classic from Wakefield. Tilted abdomen, tunnelled chest, featureless head; the forms rise and fall, swell or taper in one continuous rhythmic flow, the power always latent and never forced.

Upstairs, in a section devoted to animals, the little-known Alan Durst emerges as a major artist with his bear and tiger, both chunkily massive but delicately observed. Maurice Lambert (brother of Constant) produces an uneasy amalgam of Vaughan Williams and Brancusi in "Lark Ascending". There follows a small selection of Surrealist objects and photographs of destroyed originals. The odd juxtapositions and unexpected poetic equations aim to set the mind dreaming, free from the shackles of reason. Eileen Agar's "Angel of Anarchy" presents a plaster head bandaged and blindfolded with silk scarves, its neck encased in stitched leather, beads, feathers and sequins heightening still further the disquieting sense of suffocation.

A still greater sense of dream-like enigma, however, attends the subsequent abstract and constructed sculpture of the mid-1930s. In pieces like Hepworth's "Ball Plane and Hole" the simple elements reveal a clarity, measure and stillness that suggest a moment of supreme confidence. Like the ball itself, British sculpture is for a short period beautifully if precariously poised. Naum Gabo helped confirm this mood of optimism; his "Linear Construction", made out of perspex and nylon thread, should be seen against the light to get the full effect of its shimmering transparency. After the quasi-religious mood of this abstract sculpture, the final section, which covers the figurative revival during and after the Second World War, seems like an appendage. It does, however, prepare the visitor for some of the themes and issues that must occupy the start of Part Two.

This show reveals much native talent too long obscured by the brilliant reputations accorded the select few. Though Eric Gill and Frank Dobson have been the subject of recent retrospectives (the latter still touring to Preston, Hull and Birmingham), there are others whose work deserves to be better known, such as Maurice Lambert and Alan Durst. There is the occasional hiccup, as when Leon Underwood grows grandiloquently odd or Eric Kennington resorts to cupping a nubile girl in a gigantic hand. But on the whole British sculpture is less prone to eccentricity and sentimentality than painting. A visit to Whitechapel will convince many that our sculptural heritage needs re-evaluating and that the monument they pass daily deserves a second look.

"Part I: Image and Form" runs until 1 November. "Part II: Symbol and Imagination" runs from 27 November to 24 January 1982. A book entitled *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century* and containing eighteen essays by different authors has been produced to coincide with this exhibition and will be available from October 15.

Woodcuts restored

By Francesca Calvocoressi

Gertrude Hermes, R.A.
Royal Academy

It is an indication of fluctuating aesthetic sensibilities that the cover of the current Gertrude Hermes catalogue should illustrate her wood-engraving "Undercurrents" (1938). For her first major show, fourteen years ago at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, photographs of two handsome bronze door-knockers were preferred. In his introduction to that exhibition Bryan Robertson felt compelled to defend the artist's print-making activities: "Any work done in this medium is likely to be downgraded, automatically, unless it is a by-product of other and more celebrated work already established and accepted in terms of a specific imagination". Just as the Victorian or Salon painter hoped to prove his artistic mettle by producing a full-blown historical or mythological subject, so between the wars sculpture played an equally glamorous and important role. Wood-engraving necessarily bowed to sculpture. Today it needs no apology.

If Hermes would like to be remembered primarily as a sculptor, it is her prints which nevertheless appear the more original. The guiding spirits behind her three-dimensional work are Gill and Gaudier-Brzeska for her faintly primitivist sculpture of the 1930s, much of which is executed in polished wood, and the later Epstein for her bronze portrait busts of the post-war period. Animals and children predominate, the latter sculpted without sentimentality but capturing well a mixture of chubbiness and independence of spirit: "Judith and Simon" (1936) and the triple portrait of the Sainsbury children (1939) are striking works.

A whole generation of wood-engravers born between 1890 and 1910, of which Hermes is part, is fast dying or has reached an age where engraving is no longer possible, for it is a form of print-making which requires excellent eyesight, a steady hand and a good deal of strength. Joan Hassall and George Mackley have both had to abandon the medium; and since Hermes's Whitechapel exhibition in 1967, her husband, Blair Hughes-Stanton, Leon Underwood, at whose art school in Hammersmith they first met, William McCance, with whom Hughes-Stanton and Hermes both collaborated at the Gregynog Press, John Nash, Clifford Webb, Ethelbert White, Reynolds Stone and most recently Leo Wyatt (the last two best known for their bookplates and lettering) have all died. Gertrude Hermes the wood-engraver, eighty this year and certainly due for re-appraisal, could not wish for a more fitting place for a retrospective than the Royal Academy to which she was elected a member in 1971.

Gertrude Hermes: "Self Portrait" (1949).

Technically, her wood-engravings are highly accomplished. In a special number of the magazine *Studio* devoted to contemporary wood-engravers, published in 1936, Clare Leighton singled her out as being the most creative of a group of artists which included Agnes Miller Parker, Hughes-Stanton, Eric Ravilious and John Farleigh. This sort of admiration was widespread amongst the engravers of her generation. An early print such as "Through the Windscreen" (1926), in which the headlights of a car catch in their beam telegraph poles and trees with the road bending away into the night, is full of period atmosphere, its crisp modern image rendered by a multitude of fine lines. The flower pieces and nature scenes of the 1930s, for instance "Willows and Waterlillies" and the better known circular "Autumn Fruits", are minutely realized but not overworked and so retain a great liveliness. The other aspect of Hermes's work of this time, in sculpture as well as engravings, is a biblical or allegorical strain expressed in a figurative style overlaid with a kind of organic abstraction. Bodies soar, reach out, embrace, tumble and plunge, in prints with titles like "A Creation", "Valley of Humiliation", "River of God", "Adam and Eve" and "Undercurrents" itself. Clare Leighton warned of the dangers of this mystical idiom, whose chief exponents were Underwood and Hughes-Stanton. In their work, as in Hermes's, cosmic fantasizing was used as a pretext to explore erotic themes: a similar ambiguity is reflected in Gill's religious work of this period. Bryan Robertson mentioned Hermes's sympathy with the novels of D. H. Lawrence. It is therefore no surprise to find her in 1934 producing *The Garden of Caresses*, a series of six explicitly sexual copper engravings. Almost fifty years later these no longer shock, and the hints of eroticism in other works seem coy and self-conscious.

It would have been helpful to have had Hermes's achievement placed in context, to have had her work compared with that of her contemporaries. As it is, David Brown's introduction is a useful outline of her career but, though it shifts the emphasis, adds little to the information given in the Whitechapel catalogue.

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commentary

Vices and victims

By R. V. Holdsworth

The Witch of Edmonton
The Other Place, Stratford

The witch of *The Witch of Edmonton* was Elizabeth Sawyer, a crazed and lonely old woman who was hanged at Tyburn in April, 1621. Her trial, even allowing for the undemanding requirements as to evidence which operated in such cases, was a cruel absurdity. Charged with "witching unto death" a fellow villager who had obviously died of an epileptic fit, she was found guilty of achieving this through the Devil's help on the grounds that she was a one-eyed cripple, was "not able to speak a sensible or ready word for her defence", and had on her body a teat with which she suckled a familiar spirit. This teat, judging from the information gloatingly supplied by her interrogator, the Reverend Henry Goodcole, was actually a thrombosed pile. Ballads elaborating the witch's sorceries were sold in the streets on the day of her hanging, and Goodcole cashed in with a pamphlet describing the confession which he had "with great labour. . . extorted from her". The theatre's reaction was predictable. The Prince's Men commissioned a team of collaborating playwrights, including Dekker, Ford, Rowley and possibly Webster, to rush out a version of the affair for the stage.

The play they wrote is not at all the halting and heartless melodrama one might have expected. Goodcole's pamphlet is ransacked for detail, particularly concerning the dog "sometimes black, sometimes white" which Elizabeth Sawyer said was her familiar, but its sanctimonious confidence is rejected, and the central figure is a persecuted outcast, society's victim before she is the Devil's, who is driven to conclude that "'Tis all one / To be a witch as to be counted one". A second plot, apparently the dramatists' own invention, provides a parallel pattern of social entrapment and collective guilt. This concerns Frank Thorney, who by a combination of weakness, paternal bullying and fear of poverty is propelled from deceit to bigamy to murder, joining Mother Sawyer on the gallows at the end of the play. The real witches, it is implied, are the nobility, who exploit and impoverish the countryside, and "by enchantments can whole lordships change / To trunks of rich attire" – a point made through the figure of Sir Arthur Clarington, who seduces Frank's first wife and abets his bigamy, and later by the Devil-Dog, who exits from rural Edmonton to batten on the "corrupted greatness" of the court.



The frontispiece to the first edition (1658) of The Witch of Edmonton, *"A known true story composed into a tragi-comedy by divers well-esteemed poets, acted often at the Cockpit in Drury Lane, once at Court, with singular applause".*

A hit at the time, *The Witch of Edmonton* has been rediscovered on the twentieth-century stage. (Literary critics have lagged behind, with the conspicuous exception of Eliot, who thought the clown Cuddy Banks "worthy to rank with clowns of Shakespeare", and praised the play's depth of emotion, its "profound sense of 'the pity of it'".) Sybil Thorndike gave an acclaimed performance as Mother Sawyer in the Phoenix Society production in 1921, a success repeated by Edith Evans at the Old Vic in 1936, when Alec Guinness played Thorney's father. Bernard Miles's production at the Mermaid in 1962 was also highly praised. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that any of these surpassed the current production at Stratford, directed by Barry Kyle.

This is a straight, energetic and sensitive rendering of the play, sustained by powerful performances in all its major roles, and making astonishingly dextrous use of a multitude of rustic props and a restricted set (there is even a pond for Cuddy to fall into). There is no sell-out to farce or parody. Miles Anderson as the Dog is terrifying, slowly tripping his way from inside a harmless-looking sack on a wheelbarrow for his first appearance (when, like Mephistopheles to Faustus, he is accidentally summoned by Mother Sawyer's cursing), looking on with ferocious intensity as Frank's mind gradually receives the appalling knowledge that he is about to murder his second wife, and suddenly stretching a long black arm from underneath Frank's bed to put the blood-stained dagger in his pocket. Miriam Karlin's witch conveys a poignant sense of defiant vulnerability and Gerard Murphy as Frank has exactly the right blend of tenderness, cowardice and bewilderment. Of the two wives, Juliet Stevenson as Susan is outstanding in the simple dignity she brings to an apparently rather flat part; Harriet Walter as Winifred tends to overplay her role as the conscience-stricken survivor, resorting to an ever-more nasal Mummerset to signal remorse.

There are a few other false notes. I do not understand why the cast are made to begin and end the play with hymns by Herbert and Bunyan, or why the Devil-Dog, whose final appearance is in white when he is no longer disposed to assist Mother Sawyer, should on this occasion be equipped with stigmata. His announced departure to prey on the court is contradicted in the closing tableau, when he reappears (in black) to stretch out a paw towards the unsuspecting Winifred, who is seen nursing Frank's posthumous child. It seems an unnecessary grab at a modishly "open" conclusion, unworthy of such a fine production.

All the world's offstage

By D. M. Thomas

The Love-Girl and the Innocent
Aldwych Theatre

The Russian title of Solzhenitsyn's play is *Olen' i shalashovka*. *Olen'* literally means a deer, and was prison-camp slang for a newcomer who has not yet learnt the ropes; *shalashovka* is a slang word, the root of which is the shack or hide that a hunter or fisherman might build of twigs and leaves. In the camps of the Gulag, it meant the tent of blankets made by a male prisoner to entertain a female: hence, with a feminine suffix, a girl who "shacked-up" with prisoners. The English title, created by the original translators, is obviously too literary, too "nice", yet it is hard to think of a better. The authors of the new translation used by the Royal Shakespeare Company, Jeremy Brooks and Kitty Hunter-Blair, suggested *The Greenhorn and the Shackereen*, but sensibly decided against it. The problem over the title hints at a much more important difficulty: how can our nice, accomplished English actors and actresses, mostly well-slimmed and sometimes suitably crop-headed, speaking our nice English language, the words of our decent humanity, bring us close to the reality of the Gulag?

Of course, they cannot. Elsinore, Macbeth's Scotland – yes; Thebes – yes, even through translation; the Gulag – no: because it happened, and in our time. Out of the draft wagons of Ralph Koltai's grimly atmospheric stage stumble the excellent Aldwych professionals, who never quite succeed in suspending their own disbelief. The actresses, in particular, at times stand or sit with folded arms like bored characters in Chekhov, instead of hungry prisoners who have endured a dreadful journey to nowhere and are beginning an endless sentence in a Corrective Labour Camp. The Russian names fall awkwardly; occasional bursts of singing are too stagily atmospheric. As the evening progresses, however, the company begins to feel, or to express, greater conviction. A fight between the *zeks*, or political prisoners, and two crooks – excused work because they are "social allies" of Stalinism – is enacted with all the acrobatic panache of a company used to Shakespearean brawls. Very successful, and deeply moving, is a scene near the end in which the prisoners are seen backstage, dressing up and making up for a camp entertainment. As they step from their filthy prison-clothes to put on bright and elegant costumes, they are moving briefly into the real world – grace, play, beauty. It is a poignant reversal of the normal process, of actors stepping out of reality when they prepare to go on stage. This scene is beautifully done.

It is also the only scene in which Solzhenitsyn moves from an external portrayal of camp-life, its relentless graft (in both senses of the word), to an internal conflict. The *olen'*, Nemov, is faced with a moral choice. Liuba, his *shalashovka*, tells him that she can either give way to the sexual demands of the corrupt camp doctor, Mereshchun, but still see Nemov occasionally, or the doctor will make sure they are parted, by sending him on the next shipment to an even more remote and terrible output of the Gulag. Nemov, like Solzhenitsyn himself, refuses to compromise with evil, believing that it is more important to live decently than to save one's skin. We are uncomfortably aware that his highminded refusal to share Liuba will be as costly for her as for him. Incorruptibility can be irritating to those who are corruptible – that is, to practically everyone.

We are presented with sharks, but not devils, in the labour camp. Among several fine individual performances in the Aldwych production – including Dearbhla Molloy as Liuba and Terry Wood as a foundry ganger who struggles with quiet courage to look after his workers as best he can – Norman Rodway and Oliver Ford Davies stand out for their intelligently-judged portrayals of the venal camp commandant and the camp doctor respectively. These two affable men get on famously together, even though the doctor is himself a prisoner, because they share the same interest in feathering their nests. The commandant is no Eichmann, the doctor no Menges; they are not actively cruel; indeed, if fate had made them my English solicitor (say) and family doctor, I would probably find them likeable fellows. They simply work the system to their own best advantage, and it's bad luck if, in the system in which they happen to be, their perfectly normal selfishness increases the misery of others.

So it is a play which draws the audience on to the stage. Had it been performed in Moscow's Contemporary Theatre soon after the appearance of *Denisovich*, a large part of the audience would have been former *zeks*. It is amazing even to contemplate that first night which never took place. The authorities banned it during rehearsals for the ostensible reason that people had grown to revere the memory of the *zeks* who had perished in the camps, whereas Solzhenitsyn was showing some of them in a bad light. At the Aldwych, the first night audience consisted only of potential ex-*zeks*, so to speak; we were all potentially the innocent Nemov; the corrupt and genial doctor, making a private little paradise out of hell; the love-girls who screwed around in order to stay alive. I found myself as disturbingly conscious of the people around me as of the characters on stage. The interval, the fight to get served at the bar, became almost another episode in the play. Perhaps the restrained, somewhat tense, applause at the end indicated that others had experienced the same disturbance. I couldn't help wishing that Meyerhold, surviving the shot in the back of the neck, had directed the production, rather than the excellent, but English, Clifford Williams.

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commentary

Trebling up

By Craig Brown

Three Men in a Boat
Mayfair Theatre

This is a one-man show, a fact that should have been made clearer to my companion, who spent the first half waiting for the other two to turn up. Happily, the one man, Jeremy Nicholas, realizes that the pyrotechnics involved in endlessly switching hats and funny voices and jumping about the stage with the occasional bark would wreak only anxiety from an audience; instead, he is a narrator who allows characterization to slip into his anecdotes.

The book is a hymn to sloth. The three have a "general disinclination to work of any kind" and feel that life is "an idle dream to be gaped and yawned through". Reading it, one forgets to wonder how or why "J" summoned up the energy to write it, but confronted by the sight of him leaping into action to enact the smallest contretemps with a lock-keeper or mishap with the boat it is hard to turn a blind eye to the contradiction. Would this sporting jester really have found water too damp? One or two of Nicholas's gestures appear a little out of character, too; particularly his habit of repeatedly sticking his finger into his ear and, minutes later, wiping it on his hair. So why is the show so engaging?

It begins with Nicholas, dressed perfectly in sharply-creased trousers and stripey red blazer, laying the table for tea. The two empty chairs indicate that his companions are expected. Montmorency is offstage, and barks at every mention of his name. And Nicholas dives in, through the list of his and his companions' ailments, through the decision to take all those things they couldn't do without rather than those which they could do with, through the trouble with the toothbrush, and the muddle at Waterloo, to the river at Kingston, or "Kyningestun", as it was once called in the days when Saxon "kinges" were crowned there. Soon Nicholas's over-enthusiasm, which manifests itself in a series of exaggerated and rather camp facial expressions, settles down, and the atmosphere becomes loving, sharing and powered by a joyous bewilderment. Nicholas, who co-adapted the book, understands that its charm lies in its lengthy tangents (indeed, the whole ridiculous masterpiece is a tangent) and lets the best episodes flow their course. He excels less at the quieter discourses and musings than at the more flamboyant and action-packed scenes: the tin of pineapple "so strange, so weird, so unearthly in its wild hideousness" seems to be there on the stage, unrecruiting and taunting. Similarly, Nicholas revels in the depiction of Harris's appalling rendition of the Admiral's song from *Pinafore*. In these scenes, the dreadful compulsion to look pleased, that grips the audiences of all one-man shows, is thrown to the winds and genuine laughter and delight take over.

By having to shorten and speed up the book, Nicholas inevitably deprives it of much of its meandering charm, but this blunter form makes its real strangeness and power much clearer: these three men feeling miserable while rain patters on the canvas above them, becoming irritated with the habits of each other and exasperated by the contrariness of inanimate objects, could well be refugees from a Beckett play, and their relationship to the Thames, the resting place of dead dogs and suicides, of stubborn pineapple tins and cracked branches, if told more sombrely would no doubt merit the attention of coveys of thesis writers. One of the most remarkable parts of the play is Nicholas's description of the dead woman they find floating in the Thames at Goring. "Six shillings a week does not keep body and soul together very unitedly. They want to get away from each other when there is only such a very slight bond as that between them." Though it stands out in tone from the rest (an emotional switch which Nicholas manages perfectly) it is only the dark side of the prevailing idea behind the work; that to loll, obeying all one's disinclinations, is probably the best thing in the long run.

The harassments of greatness

By Julie Hankey

Macready
Arts Theatre

It should be said straight away that this one-man show about the early nineteenth-century actor Macready makes an enjoyable and very funny evening. My only doubt is whether Frank Barrie, the author and performer, should bother with the personal form, "I", at all. So little does he himself evoke the perverse and excruciated character of Macready (though he tells us about it) that he might just as well be a high-spirited friend, say Dickens, describing him to a green-room full of hilarious actors while the man himself confesses furiously to his diary somewhere else.

Arguably, an evening with Dickens, or for that matter Frank Barrie, is more entertaining than an evening with Macready. You wouldn't have got him reading snippets out of *Fifty Years of Green Room Gossip*, or doing send-ups of contemporary stage stereotypes: "terror", right leg planted diagonally forward, arms raised in front, "terror from the other direction", left leg forward, etc. He would sooner have thrown the book than look at it, and hurl curses at the profession than make fun of it. Barrie hurls a curse or two, but his style is predominantly genial.

Barrie's interest in Macready seems professional rather than personal. He is most convincing when he imagines for us how the man acted, and what his frustrations must have been in having an ideal in advance of his public and, often, of his own powers. At one moment he makes the point beautifully by showing Macready pantomiming his way through a speech and simultaneously peppering it with bracketed self-criticisms: "vulgar", "don't saw the air", "too coarse". In another telling moment he shows him taking the, as it seemed, tremendous risk of sitting for a soliloquy and speaking it "naturally". As the stage darkens and the spotlight comes up (something Macready would have liked) he has us listening pin-still to "Oh that this too too sullied flesh", act by Barrie-as-Hamlet, rather than Barrie-as-Macready-as-Hamlet. Then with a quick transition and a flood of light Macready assures us triumphantly that "they were listening".

But, perversely when he has such intimate material to hand in the diaries, Barrie is essentially the raconteur, the biographer with a gift for imitations, rather than the autobiographer. He makes no sustained attempt to *be* Macready (as Macready would have put it), other than illustratively. His idiom is breezily modern, the story detachedly summary. The "I" is at arm's length. "I was becoming famous for my pauses": "I did a remarkable thing for 1820", speaking of a production, "I rehearsed it". The sense of the present moment, so special to the diary, is swept away in the flow of retrospective narrative. Instead it becomes a store of anecdote.

But the diary is more than that. The bitter confessions of intemperate rage; the stinging sense of a snub; the painful shyness at being called upon to speak at a dinner; the struggle to cross the road to give alms in public; the immediacy of these feelings could furnish a performance of extraordinary range and power. It is a pity Barrie misses such chances. He does briefly show something of Macready's feelings for his leading actress, Helen Faucit, but it is typical that he should have avoided the agonizing episode of the death of his three-year-old daughter.

Even in the descriptions of external events there is a flattening out of detail. The famous thrashing of Bunn – the despicable lessee of Drury Lane – lacks the burning precision of that day's entry. Macready's own words: "You damned scoundrel! How dare you use me in this manner!" and "You rascal, would you bite?", Bunn's "Murder, murder", and the prompter's "Sir, you had better go to your room, you had better go to your room" – all this is cut. Similarly, Barrie's description of the Astor Place riots in New York which were designed to wreck Macready's performance of *Macbeth*, cuts the actual progress of the play:

> Mr. Povey, as I was going to my raised seat in the banquet scene, came up to me and in an undertone, much frightened, urged me to cut out some part of the play and bring it to a close. I turned upon him sharply and said that I had consented to do this thing – to place myself here . . . it must be done . . .' I went down to change my dress . . . water was running down fast from ceiling to the floor . . . the stones hurled in had broken some pipes

and so on.

Since Barrie chooses not to come in close, he would have gained by declaring himself openly as an outside narrator avoiding the limitations of the first person. He then could have legitimately allowed himself the licence he once indulges in, when he brings in the first-person voices of Fanny Kemble and Alfred Bunn. He could have set Macready in his circle. And, paradoxically, by drawing freely on his friends and colleagues, he might, without sacrificing his irony, have come closer to the private man – as, for example, here, in Bulwer Lytton's words:

> I saw Macready in all the pomp of an overflowing house, a most successful afterpiece, a most triumphant opera, and a most gorgeous private box. But in his pomp was sadness. He sighed at congratulations and complained of the harassments of greatness, and the uncertainty of success. Unhappy Man! When he gets a million, he will have arrived at the summit of his sorrows.

A Gissing conference

By Gillian Tindall

"Who knows George Gissing?" enquired an article by Russell Kirk in the *Western Humanities Review* some thirty years ago, and the question has been asked with such increasing frequency since that one might be excused for supposing that we must now be near finding an answer. At that time Gissing had been dead almost fifty years, and that is the traditional interval during which a writer and his reputation lie dormant, awaiting rediscovery by a new generation. In the 1920s and 30s only a few perspicacious readers (among them Virginia Woolf, and George Orwell whose own Gordon Comstock so resembled a Gissing anti-hero) appreciated Gissing: hardly any of his books were in print; he had to be read in what Orwell, with a phrase nicely adjusted to the subject, described as "soup-stained editions from public libraries".

How different the picture is now! Exactly fifty-one years after Gissing's death (of lung-disease in the Pyrenees in 1903) the first full-length biographical study of him appeared; another followed in the 1960s (Jacob Korg's *George Gissing, a Critical Biography*, recently re-issued by the Harvester Press) and in the same period a series of carefully researched monographs on various aspects of his life began to appear from a devotee at the University of Lille, Pierre Coustillas. My own *The Born Exile* appeared in 1974, and since then at least two more full-length books on him have appeared, plus articles, bibliographies and critical collections. Another study, by John Halperin, is due from OUP this winter and at least one other serious book is in preparation. Many of his novels are available in recent editions.

Yet the answer is not as simple as that, as was made clear by Peter Keating, Speaking of Gissing's elusive, contradictory nature, as evinced in both his life and his books, Keating stressed that a key element in Gissing's appeal is the way in which each reader feels, in the company of this author, as if he is making an individual discovery and is responding to an essentially private and personal voice. The novelist whose most widely read book (*New Grub Street*) is at once a detailed window on the world of late-Victorian literary production and an anguished cry against the pain of having to produce a literary work at all, must in a sense always remain an outsider, a slightly uneasy figure not so much in the shadow of greater contemporaries (Hardy, Wells, Bennett) but shadowing them, a distinctive yet elusive presence on the fringe of several worlds, but never quite at home in any of them. Indeed there seems a peculiar symbolic appropriateness in the fact that Gissing's most ardent modern scholar, and the presiding spirit of the symposium – Coustillas – should himself be a foreigner.

In a similar way, literary discussion during the weekend showed a persistent tendency to a preoccupation with two of the subjects that haunt Gissing's novels – food and wives – which of course turned out to be inextricably entwined. Gissing married two sensationally unsuitable wives before finally escaping to France and relative compatibility in the company of a third lady; yet from this supposed idyll he wrote to Wells that he "thought night and day of boiled potato – of a slice of boiled potato – of tarts – of puddings – of tea-cakes – ". Genuine starvation, as one speaker, David Grylls, ably contended? Or a more obscure and unrequitable emotional hunger? The argument raged while, across the untypically sunny Yorkshire garden, boiled potatoes and puddings called mutely from the dining hall. Perhaps Gissing, that "damaged, joy-loving human being", would have been amused as well.

Meanwhile, his birthplace in Wakefield, a modest Georgian brick house behind an erstwhile chemist's shop, has been rescued in the nick of time by the efforts of a few local devotees from the attentions of a demolition-minded local authority, and, with financial help from the same authority, is in process of rehabilitation. If the Gissing Trust (formed in 1978) can raise enough money, a small Gissing centre-cum-museum will be established there. Recently, under the auspices of the Trust and the Yorkshire Arts Association, some thirty-odd Gissing readers, plus eight guest speakers, including Korg and Halperin from the West Coast of America, assembled at Bretton Hall near Wakefield for a Gissing symposium. As is the way of literary conferences on essentially tragic figures, it proved a particularly jolly occasion. Who knows George Gissing? Who now, one is inclined to respond, does *not* know him?

The fabulous Falstaff

By David Nokes

Falstaff
Half Moon New Theatre

This is the play of the book of the plays. Falstaff, we know, was not only witty in himself, but the cause that wit is in other men. James White with his *Falstaff Letters* in 1796, and Robert Nye with his recent novel are only two of the men so beguiled by the fat knight's wit as to attempt to supply the details that Shakespeare overlooked. Nye's novel is a Rabelaisian extravaganza in which Falstaff / Fastolfe achieves mythic dimensions. His voice and experiences, though rooted in history, are timeless, weaving echoes of Coleridge and Sterne, Eliot and Joyce, into the basic Shakespearean tapestry. The result is a richly sensuous narrative that resonates with all the central English myths of Arthur and Avalon, Albion and Agincourt.

Inevitably David Buck's dramatization has to forego many of Nye's complex strategies and convoluted cross-references. But it preserves the essence of the novel. Buck's Falstaff is a superb teller of tales, an actor, a raconteur. In Mick Bearwish's intimate and evocative set, this tub of guts boasts, struts and reminisces, charming us, inveigling us and tickling us with his stories. He plays the part with an unflagging energy and a sureness of touch that indicate complete immersion in the character, varying his tales as cleverly as Scheherezade. His description of the plague has a stark and chilling horror that reminds us of Defoe. There's an exuberant pageantry as he recounts his first arrival in the great pleasure dome of London, and encounters there "a damsel with a dulcimer". There's all the braggadocio of a recruiting sergeant in his evocation of the field of Agincourt, and the sardonic wit of a courtier, as he relates how the Emperor Heliogabalus had his followers smothered in rose petals from a pure whim. And through it all there runs a constant stream of bawdy anecdotes, as good as that of any stand-up comic.

Directed by John Tydeman, this one-man show is far more than a piece of fustian or pastiche. It's an evening of poetry and humanity, surprising, moving and funny, which deserves to be seen by far more than the handful who were at the New Half Moon on the night that I saw it.

Fifty years on . . .

The TLS of September 24, 1931, reviewed Arthur Waugh's One Man's Road: Being a Picture of Life in a Passing Generation:

It is a pity that Mr Waugh has not devoted more of his book to that portion of his career which is of greatest public interest . . . We can find no adequate reason for the prolonged attention he has given to his early family history, his education at a "dame-school" and at Sherborne, or even to the years spent at Oxford. . . . For it is as publisher, rather than as *littérateur*, that Mr Waugh, when writing his life, primarily commands our attention. For in that capacity he has a unique story to tell. He had a very interesting experience when associated with the ingenious Balestier in the John W. Lovell Company. In 1890 there was no copyright protection for English authors in America. Balestier, foreseeing that copyright legislation was approaching, set himself to secure the good will of Kipling and other writers by publishing authorized editions of their works in America.

to the editor

The Afghan Revolution

Sir, – Anthony Arnold (Letters, September 4) describes as absurd my contention (July 3) that the root of the disagreement between Hafizullah Amin and the USSR concerned the interpretation of the Afghan revolution – whether it was a national democratic or a socialist revolution. The evidence is against him, however, and his remarks suggest that he does not appreciate the political significance of the argument about labels.

The theory of the national democratic revolution was designed to cover those situations where the working class was insufficiently developed to seize power and to govern alone through its own party. At its formation in 1965 the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan endorsed this theory and reaffirmed its adherence to it in May 1978. Following the purge of the Parcham faction in July and August 1978, references to the national democratic revolution became fewer and Khalqi policies made it clear that the party believed that it could govern alone, creating its own support through land reform and beating down opposition by force. From the early summer of 1978 the USSR remonstrated against this policy, urging the formation of the united national front considered appropriate to the national democratic revolution. In June and July the PDPA seemingly accepted this advice, stopped land reform, and agreed to form a national front.

It is evident, however, that a powerful section of the party, led by Amin, opposed this moderate policy, and its opposition was made plain in theoretical arguments. Amin argued that the Afghan revolution was a new model of working-class revolution and that the regime was a working-class dictatorship. It was unnecessary that the working class should be in a majority for there to be a working-class revolution. The PDPA was a working-class party because it had a working-class ideology, which it had acquired, as it were, by osmosis from other working-class parties. The practical implications of this theoretical formulation are clear: Amin and his followers, in opposition to the USSR, believed that they could govern alone with radical policies suitable for a proletarian dictatorship. The Soviet objection to Amin was not (as Mr Arnold implies) that he was proposing to reverse the ideological direction but that he wanted to advance along the path to socialism too quickly and that in doing so he was endangering the gains of the revolution and important Soviet interests. What direction Amin might eventually have taken had he not been overthrown is, of course, another matter.

The soundness of this interpretation has been confirmed by subsequent events. Since the Parchamis were restored by Soviet arms the concept of the national democratic revolution has been reasserted, more conciliatory policies adopted, and the national front formed. The delay in the formation of the front may be explained partly by the extent of Afghan opposition to the regime and partly to continued opposition by Khalqis within the party. It is noteworthy that the Afghan revolution has never been described as socialist in any Soviet publication and that among other charges against Amin is the contention that he pursued mistaken leftist policies.

Under the theory of the national democratic revolution the PDPA, as the so-called vanguard party, certainly controls policy and directs government, but it does share power in the sense of admitting other groups to discussions of policy and to a share in government.

M. E. YAPP.

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'Why Viet Nam?'

Sir, – Whew! There are not many old wounds of the English-French-American (and Chinese) in-fighting in Indochina of 1945 which Dennis Duncanson does not gouge at in his review of Archimedes Patti's *Why Viet Nam?* (August 21).

Without for a moment accepting much of what he says about Ho and the Americans let me simply confine myself to the slur he casts on Lieutenant-Colonel A. Peter Dewey, a distinguished young officer, the son of a Republican Congressman from Chicago, a Yale graduate, a one-time correspondent of the *Chicago Daily News* in Paris who covered the fall of France, who joined the Polish Army fighting in France, returned to the United States after the French defeat and enlisted in the US Army, serving as an intelligence officer in Africa, parachuted into occupied France for the OSS and ultimately headed the OSS mission which reached Saigon in early September 1945.

This is the unnamed man whom Dennis Duncanson dismisses in the words: "its leader [Colonel Dewey] made such a nuisance of himself that [General] Gracey ordered him out". Mr Duncanson goes on to make a rather turgid comparison of Dewey with young John Birch, the American officer who was killed in China and whose name was adopted by the John Birch Society.

Mr Duncanson does not mention that General Gracey did everything possible to prevent the OSS mission headed by Colonel Dewey from coming to Saigon and that the mission was permitted to come after an American protest caused Mountbatten to overrule Gracey. Nor does he note that the OSS mission arrived in Saigon some ten days before Gracey and that until Gracey's arrival the city had been relatively quiet.

Dewey was murdered on September 26, 1945 at about 1.30 pm not far from the house where the OSS was headquartered, probably by Vietnamese who mistook him for a French officer. This was the day he was scheduled to leave Saigon under the expulsion order issued by General Gracey. Many circumstances of Dewey's death still remain unclear and his body was never recovered.

In a tribute to Dewey in the *New York Times* the late Arthur Krock wrote: "Peter Dewey boldly met every risk which high spirit, total absence of physical fear, and hatred of autocracy impelled him to seek. He survived these, to be shot from ambush by natives whose protest against foreign domination he had examined with the sympathy he felt for all who are thus subject. It is one of the first American casualties in the bodeful era of peace-making that has released passions as violent as those of war".

In fact, Colonel Dewey was the first American casualty in the Vietnam war, a noble young man whose memory is venerated by all who knew him and all, I should have supposed, who knew of him. Had there been more Peter Deweys in Indochina in 1945 fewer Peter Deweys would have been killed there in the years to come.

HARRISON E. SALISBURY.

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'Labyrinths'

Sir, – I can add to Terry Hunt's versions of Borges (Letters, September 11). He quotes from the Penguin edition of Borges's *Labyrinths* the following: "with its architecture and its playing cards, with the dread of its mythologies and the murmur [sic] of its languages". Alastair Reid's translation of the original has this: "with its architecture and its playing cards, its mythological terrors and the sound of its dialects". This is much nearer to the other version by Sherry Morgan that Mr Hunt also quotes, even though that appears to arrive in English filtered through the French.

The clue to the mystery is simple. Mr Irby may be a distinguished Hispanist but he cannot write intelligible English. The Penguin *Labyrinths* adds an iridescence to Borges that I do not think can be found in the original. Mr Irby, in "Death and the Compass", has "the numbered divisibility of a jail". Another translator, Norman Thomas di Giovanni has "the numbered chambers of a cell block", which at least has the merit of making sense. When Mr Irby has (in *The Circular Ruins*) "the unanimous night", Mr di Giovanni has "the encompassing night"; when Irby puts forward "the infinite villages" and "the violent mountainside", di Giovanni gives us "the numberless villages" and "the steep slopes of the mountain".

The inference is clear. Unless Borges is to rank as a master of nonsense prose, the Penguin edition is misleading and should be withdrawn. For further discussion of the matter I refer your readers to an article, "Borges and his Translators", which I published in *Lines Review* 49 (1974).

PHILIP HOBSBAUM.

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'Renaissance Self-Fashioning'

Sir, – Aren't ellipses wonderful? In his review of my *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (September 4), Alastair Fowler is determined to use me for the most part as an example of one of those critics who "seem to work on the assumption that men have always been pretty much the same; so that no endeavours of scholarship – no constructs of former sensibility – can possibly take us further than simply reading, as if the work had been written today". No matter that my book consistently argues the opposite case; after all, Mr Fowler can quote me: "As Stephen Greenblatt puts it, 'we need . . . bring nothing to the text but ourselves.'" The ellipsis here is for the crucial words "at this level", the level in question being one I regard as inadequate precisely because it is insufficiently grounded in the text's specific historical and cultural situation. My next sentence is "Fuller understanding, however, requires that we confront not only personal history but the history of peoples" (p 179).

Does this mean that Alastair Fowler and I in fact agree? Not really. Our differences are most clearly illuminated by this remark that "even the moral and theological debates that troubled the sixteenth century were not merely power struggles: they had real substance". I had not, of course, said that they were "merely" power struggles, but the opposition between power and "real substance", particularly in the cases of More and Tyndale, seems to me hopelessly wrong, nor would it be wise to assume such an opposition for much of Renaissance culture.

One last note. Alastair Fowler writes, "When Greenblatt chooses to ask about exploitation of the Third World, Tudor culture must learn the new term and come as clean as it can". I plead guilty to taking a dim view of the Tudors in Ireland and the Spanish in the Americas, but the new term "Third World" – comically inappropriate in the context of sixteenth-century England – is Mr Fowler's own.

STEPHEN GREENBLATT.

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Japan and Nuclear War

Sir, – Professor Vincent's review (September 11) casts a cold eye upon the political rise and thought of Mr Benn, and somewhat beyond. His comment that "The experiment of a nuclear-free zone in a war against a nuclear power has after all been tried at Hiroshima" seems to err in taste as well as fact, bearing in mind that prior to the American action the whole Earth, not merely Japan, might reasonably have been described as a nuclear-free zone. Perhaps it would not be unduly pedantic and deficient in a sense of humour to suggest that it was the Americans rather than the Japanese who were experimenting, and that since that time the countries which have run the greatest risk of nuclear attack have been those which possess nuclear weapons.

MARTIN BLYTH.

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Henry Fielding

Sir, – If Donald Greene (September 11) really thinks Walpole subscribed to ten volumes of Fielding's *Miscellanies*, he must either believe that the *Miscellanies* came out as one volume, or else that Walpole bought three sets and a third.

CLAUDE RAWSON.

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Among this week's contributors

BRIAN ALDISS's novels include *A Rude Awakening*, 1978.

SYDNEY ANGLO is Professor of the History of Ideas at University College, Swansea. His books include *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy*, 1969, and *The Entry of the Archduke Charles into Bruges*, 1974.

M. M. BADAWI is the author of *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, 1976.

JUDITH CHERNAIK's most recent novel is *The Daughter*, published earlier this year.

MARTIN COOPER's books include *Ideas and Music*, 1966, and *Beethoven: the Last Decade*, 1970.

N. B. DAVIES is Demonstrator in Zoology at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Pembroke College.

AINSLEE EMBREE is Professor of International Affairs at Columbia University, New York.

PHILIPPA FOOT is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *Virtues and Vices*, 1980.

PETER GRETTON's books include *Crisis Convoy: the Story of HX231*, 1974.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH is working on a biography of Melanie Klein.

JULIE HANKEY's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III* was published earlier this year.

R. V. HOLDSWORTH's edition of Middleton and Rowley's *A Fair Quarrel* was published in 1974.

R. J. HOLLINGDALE's books include *Thomas Mann: a Critical Study*, 1971, and *Nietzsche*, 1974.

GEOFFREY HOSKING's *Beyond Socialist Realism: Fiction since "Ivan Denisovich"* was published last year.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

DORIS LANGLEY MOORE's books include *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered*, 1974, and *Ada, Countess of Lovelace*, 1977.

WILLIAM S. MCFEELY's *Grant: A Biography* is published this month.

LUCY MAIR's books include *Marriage*, 1971, and *African Kingdoms*, 1977.

J. MORDAUNT CROOK's most recent book, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, was published earlier this year.

EDWIN MORGAN's collections of poems include *Star Gate*, 1979.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's most recent book is *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980*, 1981.

PAUL MULDOON's most recent collection of poems is *Why Brownlee Left*, 1980.

DAVID NOKES is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.

RICHARD OSBORNE is a regular contributor to *Gramophone*.

D. D. R. OWEN's books include *The Legend of Roland: A Pageant of the Middle Ages*, 1973.

PHYLLIS M. PALMER is Director of Women's Studies Graduate Program at George Washington University, Washington DC.

TOM PHILLIPS's books include *A Humument: A Treatment of a Victorian Novel*, 1980.

NESTA ROBERTS's books include *Mental Health and Mental Illness*, 1967, and *The Face of France*, 1976.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

CUSHING STROUT's *The Veracious Imagination: Essays on American History, Literature and Biography* was published earlier this year.

GILLIAN TINDALL's most recent novel is *The Intruder*, 1979.

D. M. THOMAS's most recent novel is *The White Hotel*, 1980.

A. N. WILSON is Literary Editor of *The Spectator*. His novels include *The Healing Art*, 1980.

Gower

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Honour and its enemies

By J. Mordaunt Crook

MARK GIROUARD:
The Return to Camelot
Chivalry and the English Gentleman
312pp. Yale University Press. £12.50.
0 300 02739 7

"The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of England is extinguished for ever". Burke's lament in 1790, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, turned out to be rather premature. "In fact", notes Mark Girouard, "even as he lamented, the age of chivalry was on the way back". The revival of chivalry – transformed into a code of manners, a set of social attitudes, and a spectrum of pictorial images – lasted from the French Revolution to the First World War. It supplies Dr Girouard with an absorbing theme: *The Return to Camelot*.

Girouard is an architectural historian with half a dozen books under his belt: his *Victorian Country House* (1971; 1979) is already a classic and his *Life in the English Country House* (1978) is a best-seller. But *Camelot* is not a work of architectural history, still less a piece of art history. It deals chiefly with ideas. Even so it hardly ranks as intellectual history: its philosophical content is negligible. It takes the form of an essay – but not an essay of the *belles lettres* type: the writing is seldom more than workmanlike. No, what we have here is really a prime example of the higher journalism, professionally edited, beautifully packaged and brilliantly timed. It should sell like hot cakes at Christmas. Winter 1981-82 looks set fair for nostalgia and romanticism: William Burges at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *Excalibur* at every other cinema, and the *Return to Camelot* in every bookshop. At this rate we shall soon be appointing a Curator instead of a Prime Minister.

Girouard's story starts with the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, the Indian summer of medieval chivalry: the last tournament probably took place in 1624. Then, skipping the Age of Reason, we jump to the Windsor Castle of George III, the Coronation of George IV, and the novels of Sir Walter Scott. More than anyone it was the Laird of Abbotsford who began that translation of chivalry into a code of manners for Victorian gentlemen which is Girouard's central theme. "We can only now look back on it". Scott explains, "as a beautiful and fantastic piece of frostwork, which has dissolved in the beams of the sun". Chivalry survived only in so far as its best elements had been absorbed into the code of a gentlemen: "From the wild and overstrained courtesies of Chivalry has been derived our present system of manners". Byron's scorn for medieval bric-à-brac – he talks of "monstrous mummeries" in the preface to *Childe Harolde* (1813) – was the scorn of a Regency buck. Such attitudes were soon eclipsed. By the 1840s there was a new reverence in the salons of London, and elsewhere the armoury had replaced the sculpture gallery as the focus of country-house taste.

But the book which launched the Victorian revival of chivalry was neither *Quentin Durward* (1822) nor *The Talisman* (1825), nor even *Ivanhoe* (1820). That book was *The Broad Stone of Honour*, and its author was Kenelm Henry Digby. It first appeared anonymously in 1822 and 1823, with the subtitle "Rules for the Gentlemen of England". An expanded edition, subtitled "The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry" appeared under Digby's name in four volumes in 1828-29 and 1844-48, enlarged to five volumes in 1877. These were followed in 1831-40 by eleven more gargantuan tomes entitled *Mores Catholici, or Ages of Faith*. Burne-Jones kept them by his bedside all his life. "Sillyish books both of them", he confessed, "but I can't help it, I like them". Digby came of an Anglo-Irish gentry family, and claimed Sir Kenelm Digby, the seventeenth-century natural philosopher, as a kinsman. Edward Fitzgerald remembered him as "a grand, swarthy fellow, who might have stepped out of the canvas of some knightly portrait in his Father's house – perhaps the living image of one sleeping under some cross-legg'd effigies in the church". As an undergraduate at Trinity, Cambridge, he was already besotted with the Middle Ages: one night he hid in King's College Chapel, and kept vigil there till dawn. In 1825 he became a Roman Catholic. His vision of the medieval world was now complete. "*The Broad Stone of Honour*", Dr Girouard explains,

> is full of enemies. They include atheists, deists, rationalists, Radicals, Americans, Utilitarians, and supporters of both dictatorship and democracy . . . The distinctive virtues of the chivalrous men, according to Digby, were belief and trust in God, generosity, high honour, independence, truthfulness, loyalty to friends and leaders, hardihood and contempt of luxury, courtesy, modesty, humanity, and respect for women . . . Anyone who possessed or acquired these qualities was chivalrous, and therefore a gentleman; chivalry had no essential connexion with birth . . . [For Digby] character [was] more important than intellect . . . [and] the money-making class was . . . the origin of nearly all that was wrong in England.

Digby, therefore, was "one of the founding fathers of the cold bath and the cold dip", and he taught Victorian gentlemen to despise money – that is money derived from trade, unhallowed by age.

Digby was a Romantic Tory, and his most celebrated followers were the Romantic Tories of Young England. But several of those who shared his idealized view of the Middle Ages might be described as Romantic Radicals. Matthew and William Russell of Brancepeth Castle, Lord Brougham of Brougham Hall, Lord Durham of Lambton Castle, Charles Tennyson of Bayons Manor, Colonel Wildman of Newstead Abbey, Edward Bulwer-Lytton of Knebworth: all these combined paternalism and radicalism, a love of battlements and a love of land. Their creed was the creed of the Duke of St Aldegonde in Disraeli's novel *Lothair*: "St. Aldegonde held extreme opinions, especially on political affairs, being a republican of the reddest dye. He was opposed to privilege, and indeed to all orders of men, except dukes, who were a necessity. He was also strongly in favour of the equal division of all property, except land. Liberty depended on land, and the greater the landowners, the greater the liberty . . ."

This dream of an organic community, hierarchical, pre-industrial and content – a dream adumbrated with rather more subtlety by Coleridge and Southey – had of course its comic side. Girouard's chapter on the Eglinton Tournament (1839) – and its dress-rehearsal in St John's Wood – makes the most of that memorable fiasco. So does his account of the young Victoria and Albert dancing at a fancy-dress ball at Buckingham Palace in 1842, disguised as Edward III and Queen Philippa. (Even Sir Robert Peel came in Van Dyke costume.)

It was Thomas Carlyle and the Christian Socialists – J. M. Ludlow, F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes and E. V. Neale – who translated such frivolities into the language of muscular Christianity. And it was the great, post-Arnold, public school headmasters – Cotton of Marlborough, Perceval of Clifton, Warre of Eton – who in turn instilled muscular Christianity into the minds and bodies of every schoolboy generation between 1850 and the Great War. And into the Second World War too: my own school had a Gothic chimneypiece by Tuelon, inscribed "Fight the Good Fight", festooned with sporting trophies and flanked by portraits of VCs. "Eton chapel had Sir Galahad in oil, Clifton chapel had him in stained glass. Eton produced Field Marshal Earl Roberts, Clifton Produced Field Marshal Earl Haig . . . Eton boys swung together in Johnson's 'Boating Song'; Clifton boys thundered towards the twilight goal in Newbolt's 'The Best School of All' . . ." The Georgian gentleman had been a man of taste. His Victorian counterpart was, above all, a man of honour.

Pre-Raphaelite attitudes and Courtly Love – the chivalric spirit transmuted into art and manners – might almost be seen as an escapist release from public school mores. Girouard certainly has great fun with the Four Friends of Baddesley Clinton and the life and loves of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. The paintings of Burne-Jones represented – confessedly – a landscape of dreams. "The curtain has been lifted", Walter Crane recalled, "and we had a glimpse into . . . a twilight world of dark mysterious woodland, haunted streams, meads of dark green starred with burning flowers, veiled in a dim and mystic light, and stained with low-toned crimson and gold". Still, the moral landscape of Newbolt's Clifton was not so very far away. Tennyson, in fact, supplied a direct link between both worlds: "Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King".

Towards the end of the Victorian age, all these strands – romantic, Christian, neo-feudal – found their fulfilment in the imperial dream. Between 1874 and 1902 the British Empire was increased by 4,750,000 square miles. "I contend", announced Cecil Rhodes in 1877, "that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race". The qualities of future Rhodes Scholars were to echo the qualities of Kenelm Digby's Christian gentleman: "fondness of, and success in manly outdoor sports . . . qualities of manhood, truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for the protection of the weak, kindliness, unselfishness and fellowship" – qualities held to be far more important than personal drive, business sense or even "literary and scholastic attainments". These were the qualities which cast a golden glow about the English gentleman in his decline. These were the qualities handed on from Malory to Tennyson, from Kenelm Digby to Baden-Powell, from Carlyle and Kingsley to General Gordon and Captain Oates. These were the qualities which went down at last in the mud and blood of Flanders.

Thank God we know they batted well
In the last great game of all.

"There are times", Dr Girouard concludes, "when the Great War can seem like a nightmare parody of the Eglinton Tournament".

Arthur and anti-Arthur

By D. D. R. Owen

TOSHIYUKI TAKAMIYA and DEREK BREWER (Editors):
Aspects of Malory
232pp. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. £17.50.
0 85991 068 7

KARL HEINZ GÖLLER (Editor):
The Alliterative Morte Arthure
A Reassessment of the Poem
186pp. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. £17.50.
0 85991 075 X

Full of sound scholarship, and printed almost without blemish, these two volumes introduce a new series dedicated to Arthurian Studies. The subject is one of today's few growth industries. Why should this be so? How does one explain the perennial fascination exerted by the "once and future king"? Is it born of a nostalgia for his far-off golden days (they tarnish before our eyes in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*)? Perhaps our national pride is rekindled by the memory of a British Charlemagne. It was, after all, under the influence of the Charlemagne legend that Arthur's own legend developed and took hold; and in the past it has certainly served political and ideological aspirations. Yet it attracts scholars and, more important, a loyal public far beyond Britain; and it is not insignificant that a co-editor of the first volume in the series is Japanese. The truth is that the legend's fortune was made once it was adopted by some of the finest craftsmen in world literature; for they, in turn, have inspired artists, musicians, and a host of tellers of tales who have mediated between the literary master-works and the popular imagination.

Malory may not have been the most subtle of these craftsmen but, as some of the essays devoted to him here show, he was much more than a jobbing summarizer and renovator of inherited texts. Jill Mann, for instance, concludes from her study of the concept of adventure that what he has to say transcends simple ideas of knighthood to embrace "an actuality which exists for us as for him"; and Mary Hynes-Berry finds spiritual force as well as originality in his transposition of the Grail quest from the French. Derek Brewer's introductory survey charts the main currents in Malorian interpretation and indicates special areas of present interest such as the nature of his sources and the order in which he handled them, topics that have their exponents here. We are intrigued by an appraisal of Malory's Englishness by a second Japanese scholar; and, after some intricate detective work in matters of palaeography and bibliography, the proceedings are closed by the almost traditional identity parade, with Richard R. Griffith's confident finger pointing not to the shady gentleman from Newbold Revel, but to a Thomas Malory of Papworth St Agnes.

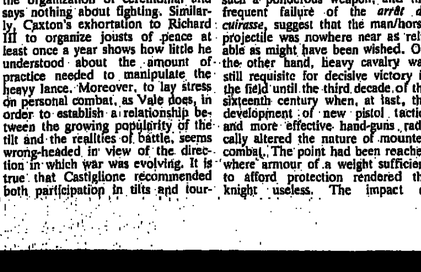
The volume is dedicated to the memory of Eugène Vinaver, who contributed to it a typically learned and illuminating essay on Malory's prose style. Vinaver's death cast a cloud over the twelfth international gathering of the Arthurian Society at Regensburg in 1979, where one of the texts under special scrutiny was the stirring romance (or epic or tragedy or *roman à clef*, depending on one's viewpoint), the *Alliterative Morte Arthure (AMA)*. It is from a selection of papers delivered at that congress that Karl Heinz Göller has compiled his volume, for which he passes in review the critical battlelines. He then gives his own interpretation of the *AMA*, regarding it as an anti-romance and a warning to rulers on the folly of war, a view which, in a further contribution, colours his reading of Arthur's dream of the dragon and bear.

Another scholar, Maureen Fries, sees the poem as the tragedy of a flawed monarch; but Arthur, says Anke Janssen in his analysis of the dream of Fortune's wheel, is not a truly tragic hero. To Manfred Markus a review of the language and style reveals paradox, ambiguity and a deep authorial scepticism. Other chapters deal with the poet's audience, his heraldic descriptions, and his use of formulae and conventional elements rendered ironic by their context, and with the laments that punctuate the narrative. In the latter feature, Renate Haas finds significant analogies with the *Chanson de Roland*; and here is something that deserves further exploration. Indeed, an examination of the *AMA* in the light of the whole Charlemagne tradition might put some of the poet's attitudes into a new perspective and perhaps modify the fashionably harsh judgments on the figure of Arthur as presented here.

For in this volume the doomed monarch receives more censure than admiration or sympathy. His lavish feast signals not his largesse but his gluttony, his pride is decried as sinful arrogance and bombast; as for his martial prowess, this is an expression of his blind hatred and brutality; he is a "tyrannical and barbaric conqueror, who cares nothing for the laws of God and chivalry" (Göller), in short, a moral degenerate: Gawain his nephew is little better, lacking wisdom and moderation, and bloodthirsty in his monomaniacal obsession with revenge. The case against them is argued from the text. It is, though, one that could equally be made against Charlemagne and Roland. One of the greatest strengths of these legends, and one that raises them above the level of the folktale, is precisely that their heroes are not ideal figures, but share the foibles and failings of common mortality. The medieval epic is to test its validity. As he admits in his opening sentence, "the cult of chivalry in the Middle Ages is not a subject that lends itself easily to analysis": but he shares Huizinga's belief that "every delusion or opinion of an epoch" has the status of a fact – something still frequently ignored by historians, who consider that the irrelation between ideas and practical affairs is altogether too treacherous a ground on which to tread. The author modestly states his purpose as being a "consideration of some aspects of the relationship between the chivalric ideals of honour and virtue and their expression in war, politics and ceremony during the fifteenth century"; and the structure of his book closely pursues this aim after a short introduction setting out Huizinga's influential evocation of the Middle Ages.

The literature of honour and virtue is first discussed, and the classical inspiration of much Burgundian writing, with its emphasis on the Roman concepts of discipline and service in peace and war, revealed. The old nobility, faced by "clercs et gens de robbe longue", recognized the value of education and the fact that birth was no longer sufficient to maintain supremacy at court. There was thus a demand for illumination on the nature of nobility; and a series of didactic works stressed the ennobling effects of physical courage and fear of reproach. There was, however, in all this an undercurrent which Dr Vale recognizes but does not sufficiently bring out. Under the guise of service, nobles were developing skills in self-advancement to counter the achievements of non-noble councillors. This was to have crucial consequences in the sixteenth century as knights were transmuted into courtiers; and, whereas Vale detects an increasing emphasis on nobility of virtue, Castiglione's perfect courtier, so popular throughout the later Rennissance, was still expected to be of noble birth.

Vale next (Chapter Two) tackles orders of chivalry, generally regarded as evidence of a gross discrepancy between exalted inspirations and "decadent aristocratic frivolity", but here shown to have been politically purposive. That the insignia of a knightly order could be employed in diplomacy is obvious and, though its practical efficacy in this respect was severely limited, much the same might be said of the dynastic marriage. More positive results were achieved, and doubtless expected, from the very structure of an order such as the Toison d'Or which was so decisively under the sovereignty of the ruler that, if you appeared in public wearing the collar of the order, "you were the Duke of Burgundy's man". Philip the Good was sufficiently adroit to exploit its unifying and disciplinary potentialities,



though under his clumsy and inflexible son, it was employed "not merely as an instrument of control, but of prosecution", and its chivalric pretensions foundered.

The tournament was another attempt to transpose chivalric ideas into actuality, generally adjudged by historians as a total failure, and Vale devotes his third chapter to the problems posed by the antithesis between violent early tournaments and their fifteenth-century successors. Central to this issue is the relationship between mock combat and real warfare; and here the direction of the author's argument is unclear. That the tournament was truly the "school of prowess" for much of its history is indisputable. However, despite the fact that the evolution of lance technique was virtually complete well before the end of the fourteenth century, new methods of battle combining more efficient projectile weaponry and infantry organization had already robbed the heavy cavalry of its supremacy. It did enjoy a renaissance towards the end of the period under discussion, but the knight was no longer the most significant force in battle.

This prompts two queries. One of these, as to the way in which knights often adapted to new better integrated military techniques, is well dealt with in this book. The other concerns whether or not the tournament remained a realistic training-ground for war: and this is less well investigated. The views of Geoffroi de Charny are cited but, since they apply to the first half of the fourteenth century, are scarcely relevant. Nor is René d'Anjou's tournament treatise helpful, because it is "practical" only for those concerned with the organization of ceremonial and says nothing about fighting. Similarly, Caxton's exhortation to Richard III to organize jousts of peace at least once a year shows how little he understood about the amount of practice needed to manipulate the heavy lance. Moreover, to lay stress on personal combat, as Vale does, in order to establish a relationship between the growing popularity of the tilt and the realities of battle, seems wrong-headed in view of the direction in which war was evolving. It is true that Castiglione recommended both participation in tilts and tourneys and individual deeds of bravery in battle: but this serves only to demonstrate the longevity of chivalric notions, and Castiglione's own incapacity as a soldier and military thinker.

The crucial point is this: the tilt became the most popular form of mock combat precisely because it was simultaneously the safest way for knights to perform quasi-military evolutions before spectators, and the simplest contest to regulate, watch, and score. In fact, Vale's emphasis on the large set-piece tournaments of the Burgundian court does little to advance his case, this would have been better served by reference to the more frequent small-scale encounters, which indicate that some warriors at least were anxious to keep up their military training. The scores achieved by competing knights are also illuminating. The standard of tilting in the late fifteenth century was alarmingly variable and even this deteriorated as chivalry entered the sixteenth century. Commynes's sneer at the incompetence of Burgundian knights at Montlhéry may not, after all, be so wide of the mark.

Having insisted that the distinction between real and mock battle has been exaggerated, Vale proceeds (Chapter Four) to the techniques of war itself in order to evaluate the mounted knight, who has normally been regarded as anachronistic before the fifteenth century and rendered increasingly irrelevant by the use of artillery and hand-guns on the battlefield. Nonetheless, the survival of such cavalry, despite its colossal expense and alleged inutility, is a paradox which merits investigation: though perhaps one should not be too ready to dismiss, as does the author, the obvious explanation of prejudice and innate conservatism on the part of the nobility. Such attitudes persist in the military caste: and the seriousness with which the value of cavalry was canvassed between the two World Wars testifies to the degree of unpreparedness and unreality possible even in the twentieth century.

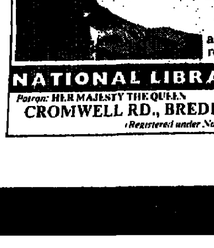
Vale provides a good, concise, technical account of developments in the strength and mobility of armour, which enabled knights to meet the threat of English long-bows, and Scottish and Swiss spears, pikes, and halberds. As he neatly puts it, "to possess an armour stamped with a double armourer's mark, tested by crossbow fire at point-blank range, was clearly the best material guarantee against sudden death in warfare". Unfortunately, not every knight could afford such insurance. It is right, too, to stress the value of Buttin's study of the evolution of the lance; but Buttin's comments both on the growing difficulty of handling such a pondefous weapon, and the frequent failure of the *arrêt de cuirasse*, suggest that the man/horse projectile was nowhere near as reliable as might have been wished. On the other hand, heavy cavalry was still requisite for decisive victory in the field until the third decade of the sixteenth century when, at last, the development of new pistol tactics and more effective hand-guns radically altered the nature of mounted combat. The point had been reached where armour of a weight sufficient to afford protection rendered the knight useless. The impact of firearms upon chivalric ideals as well as practice was crucial and is well discussed here, especially with regard to siege work, and it is noteworthy that there was no general condemnation of the new techniques by the nobility, many of whom adjusted comfortably to changing weaponry. We might add that, by the early sixteenth century, monarchs such as the Emperor Maximilian, James IV of Scotland, and Henry VIII were all manifesting a personal interest in the manufacture and handling of artillery.

To conclude his study Vale offers a number of observations on the response of the nobility to the fundamental military changes which took place from the late fifteenth century: ever more effective use of artillery in battle; the increasing impersonality of warfare with the growth of standing armies, technical specialization, and an over-all tendency towards uniformity and formal discipline; and the effects of the massive lust for booty and extreme callousness evinced by the Swiss and German mercenaries. Here again, I am uncertain about the direction of the argument. Vale says of the mercenaries' behaviour that their methods could "only erode the chivalric ethic and increase the horror of war"; but he also describes the brutality commonplace in the campaigns waged by the Burgundian nobility, and others, from the late fourteenth century: most markedly in the war against Ghent in 1451-53. Does this mean that chivalry was not outmoded because it had nothing to learn from the new violence? Or does it mean that the gap between chivalric pretensions and military nastiness was already vast long before the supposed "Waning of the Middle Ages"? Similarly, what conclusions are to be drawn from the assertions that, on the one hand, single combat (and the associated notion of personal honour) "retained its importance" while, on the other, firearms and pike formations ensured that "the unit, not the individual, played the dominant part in battle"?

Nor does the too-brief discussion of the duel really help to support Vale's conclusion that the "Renaissance cult of honour and fame owed more than it was prepared to acknowledge to the medieval cult of chivalry". That conclusion is, in itself, correct but the route whereby it is reached is crooked, and its implications are not fully realised. The skills required in the duel of honour dramatically distinguished the belligerence of the sixteenth-century noble from that of his predecessor. Personal combats *à outrance* had been fairly common between steel-encased mounted knights wielding their armour-piercing or smashing weapons – as in the fights of such bullies as John Astley or Richard Beauchamp. But in the sixteenth century knights intent upon the avenging of an insult not only dismounted and shed their cumbrous metal suits, but also took to prodding each other with rapiers. An immense literature rapidly spread abroad, attempting to reduce sword-play to scientific principles. Yet none of this had anything to do with military practice. This lethal dexterity was designed for the courtly psychopath and was quite unsuited to the modern field of battle. To talk of a continuity between chivalric idealism and Renaissance attitudes towards reputation and honour is a misleading truth.

Despite these criticisms, *War and Chivalry* is a well-researched, lucidly written, and valuable attempt to cope with a particularly difficult problem which remains of cardinal importance to all those in any way concerned with the history of chivalry – that is to anybody seriously interested in medieval and Renaissance ideas. Its very ambiguities, contradictions, and uncertainties of direction reflect not only the difficulties of the subject but also the fact that there can never be really neat and tidy answers in the history of ideas.

The *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies III* 1980, has recently been published (241pp. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. £17.50. 0 85115 142 6). This third volume of the *Proceedings* has been edited by R. Allan Brown and incorporates the papers read at the Conference held in July 1980 at Battle, Sussex. The topics discussed include "The Romanesque rebuilding of Westminster Abbey" by R. D. H. Gem, "The '*Gesta Normannorum Ducum*'" by Elizabeth M. C. van Houts, "The coming of the Chandos" by Brian Golding, "Land and power in the eleventh century" by Ann Williams, and "The beginnings of the Honour of Clare", by Richard Mortimer.


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The decent knightly thing

By Sydney Anglo

MALCOLM VALE:
War and Chivalry
206pp. 30 plates. Duckworth. £18.
0 7156 1042 2

"It is impossible to be chivalrous without a horse", wrote the late Denholm-Young, thereby imposing an intolerable burden upon those who hold open doors for ladies, help the elderly across crowded thoroughfares, or in any way succour the weak and afflicted. The problem is not merely semantic. Is the historian to interpret ideas so rigidly that any change is regarded as decay; or is he to recognize that ideas, like knights, are errant and that it is his business to enable a reader to follow these changes wherever they may lead?

Chivalry is a special problem for it has almost always been deemed decadent. Already in the twelfth century it seemed contaminated by adulterous courtly love; and in the thirteenth century there were ample signs of degeneracy: ladies attended shows where transvestite knights might sometimes be locked in combat; Henri de Loan regretted that knights were motivated in tournaments by greed alone; and Llull attempted to stop the rot by giving knighthood the status of clergy and encouraging warriors to learn how to read. Two hundred years later, Caxton translated Llull's *Ordre of Chyvalry* to remedy the ineptitude of contemporary knights; and 150 years later still Vulson collected a mass of material – much of it from the fifteenth century – showing the corrupt nobility of his own day how they ought to behave.

Modern historians, too, have been troubled by chivalric decay. Impressed by the distance between the lofty principles of honour expressed in literature and the brutal realities of warfare and political behaviour, they have tended to regard the fourteenth and, more especially, the fifteenth centuries as the truly decadent era – a view reinforced by the commonly-held opinion that, by this time, changing military techniques had rendered the heavy cavalry charge virtually obsolete as the prime battle-winner. This orthodoxy has coloured every aspect of the study of the period; and Malcolm Vale's purpose is to test its validity. As he admits in his opening sentence, "the cult of chivalry in the Middle Ages is not a subject that lends itself easily to analysis": but he shares Huizinga's belief that "every delusion or opinion of an epoch" has the status of a fact – something still frequently ignored by historians, who consider that the irrelation between ideas and practical affairs is altogether too treacherous a ground on which to tread. The author modestly states his purpose as being a "consideration of some aspects of the relationship between the chivalric ideals of honour and virtue and their expression in war, politics and ceremony during the fifteenth century"; and the structure of his book closely pursues this aim after a short introduction setting out Huizinga's influential evocation of the Middle Ages.

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though under his clumsy and inflexible son, it was employed "not merely as an instrument of control, but of prosecution", and its chivalric pretensions foundered.

The tournament was another attempt to transpose chivalric ideas into actuality, generally adjudged by historians as a total failure, and Vale devotes his third chapter to the problems posed by the antithesis between violent early tournaments and their fifteenth-century successors. Central to this issue is the relationship between mock combat and real warfare; and here the direction of the author's argument is unclear. That the tournament was truly the "school of prowess" for much of its history is indisputable. However, despite the fact that the evolution of lance technique was virtually complete well before the end of the fourteenth century, new methods of battle combining more efficient projectile weaponry and infantry organization had already robbed the heavy cavalry of its supremacy. It did enjoy a renaissance towards the end of the period under discussion, but the knight was no longer the most significant force in battle.

This prompts two queries. One of these, as to the way in which knights often adapted to new better integrated military techniques, is well dealt with in this book. The other concerns whether or not the tournament remained a realistic training-ground for war: and this is less well investigated. The views of Geoffroi de Charny are cited but, since they apply to the first half of the fourteenth century, are scarcely relevant. Nor is René d'Anjou's tournament treatise helpful, because it is "practical" only for those concerned with the organization of ceremonial and says nothing about fighting. Similarly, Caxton's exhortation to Richard III to organize jousts of peace at least once a year shows how little he understood about the amount of practice needed to manipulate the heavy lance. Moreover, to lay stress on personal combat, as Vale does, in order to establish a relationship between the growing popularity of the tilt and the realities of battle, seems wrong-headed in view of the direction in which war was evolving. It is true that Castiglione recommended both participation in tilts and tourneys and individual deeds of bravery in battle: but this serves only to demonstrate the longevity of chivalric notions, and Castiglione's own incapacity as a soldier and military thinker.

The crucial point is this: the tilt became the most popular form of mock combat precisely because it was simultaneously the safest way for knights to perform quasi-military evolutions before spectators, and the simplest contest to regulate, watch, and score. In fact, Vale's emphasis on the large set-piece tournaments of the Burgundian court does little to advance his case, this would have been better served by reference to the more frequent small-scale encounters, which indicate that some warriors at least were anxious to keep up their military training. The scores achieved by competing knights are also illuminating. The standard of tilting in the late fifteenth century was alarmingly variable and even this deteriorated as chivalry entered the sixteenth century. Commynes's sneer at the incompetence of Burgundian knights at Montlhéry may not, after all, be so wide of the mark.

Having insisted that the distinction between real and mock battle has been exaggerated, Vale proceeds (Chapter Four) to the techniques of war itself in order to evaluate the mounted knight, who has normally been regarded as anachronistic before the fifteenth century and rendered increasingly irrelevant by the use of artillery and hand-guns on the battlefield. Nonetheless, the survival of such cavalry, despite its colossal expense and alleged inutility, is a paradox which merits investigation: though perhaps one should not be too ready to dismiss, as does the author, the obvious explanation of prejudice and innate conservatism on the part of the nobility. Such attitudes persist in the military caste: and the seriousness with which the value of cavalry was canvassed between the two World Wars testifies to the degree of unpreparedness and unreality possible even in the twentieth century.

Vale provides a good, concise, technical account of developments in the strength and mobility of armour, which enabled knights to meet the threat of English long-bows, and Scottish and Swiss spears, pikes, and halberds. As he neatly puts it, "to possess an armour stamped with a double armourer's mark, tested by crossbow fire at point-blank range, was clearly the best material guarantee against sudden death in warfare". Unfortunately, not every knight could afford such insurance. It is right, too, to stress the value of Buttin's study of the evolution of the lance; but Buttin's comments both on the growing difficulty of handling such a pondefous weapon, and the frequent failure of the *arrêt de cuirasse*, suggest that the man/horse projectile was nowhere near as reliable as might have been wished. On the other hand, heavy cavalry was still requisite for decisive victory in the field until the third decade of the sixteenth century when, at last, the development of new pistol tactics and more effective hand-guns radically altered the nature of mounted combat. The point had been reached where armour of a weight sufficient to afford protection rendered the knight useless. The impact of firearms upon chivalric ideals as well as practice was crucial and is well discussed here, especially with regard to siege work, and it is noteworthy that there was no general condemnation of the new techniques by the nobility, many of whom adjusted comfortably to changing weaponry. We might add that, by the early sixteenth century, monarchs such as the Emperor Maximilian, James IV of Scotland, and Henry VIII were all manifesting a personal interest in the manufacture and handling of artillery.

To conclude his study Vale offers a number of observations on the response of the nobility to the fundamental military changes which took place from the late fifteenth century: ever more effective use of artillery in battle; the increasing impersonality of warfare with the growth of standing armies, technical specialization, and an over-all tendency towards uniformity and formal discipline; and the effects of the massive lust for booty and extreme callousness evinced by the Swiss and German mercenaries. Here again, I am uncertain about the direction of the argument. Vale says of the mercenaries' behaviour that their methods could "only erode the chivalric ethic and increase the horror of war"; but he also describes the brutality commonplace in the campaigns waged by the Burgundian nobility, and others, from the late fourteenth century: most markedly in the war against Ghent in 1451-53. Does this mean that chivalry was not outmoded because it had nothing to learn from the new violence? Or does it mean that the gap between chivalric pretensions and military nastiness was already vast long before the supposed "Waning of the Middle Ages"? Similarly, what conclusions are to be drawn from the assertions that, on the one hand, single combat (and the associated notion of personal honour) "retained its importance" while, on the other, firearms and pike formations ensured that "the unit, not the individual, played the dominant part in battle"?

Nor does the too-brief discussion of the duel really help to support Vale's conclusion that the "Renaissance cult of honour and fame owed more than it was prepared to acknowledge to the medieval cult of chivalry". That conclusion is, in itself, correct but the route whereby it is reached is crooked, and its implications are not fully realised. The skills required in the duel of honour dramatically distinguished the belligerence of the sixteenth-century noble from that of his predecessor. Personal combats *à outrance* had been fairly common between steel-encased mounted knights wielding their armour-piercing or smashing weapons – as in the fights of such bullies as John Astley or Richard Beauchamp. But in the sixteenth century knights intent upon the avenging of an insult not only dismounted and shed their cumbrous metal suits, but also took to prodding each other with rapiers. An immense literature rapidly spread abroad, attempting to reduce sword-play to scientific principles. Yet none of this had anything to do with military practice. This lethal dexterity was designed for the courtly psychopath and was quite unsuited to the modern field of battle. To talk of a continuity between chivalric idealism and Renaissance attitudes towards reputation and honour is a misleading truth.

Despite these criticisms, *War and Chivalry* is a well-researched, lucidly written, and valuable attempt to cope with a particularly difficult problem which remains of cardinal importance to all those in any way concerned with the history of chivalry – that is to anybody seriously interested in medieval and Renaissance ideas. Its very ambiguities, contradictions, and uncertainties of direction reflect not only the difficulties of the subject but also the fact that there can never be really neat and tidy answers in the history of ideas.

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Microcosms of old Cairo

By M. M. Badawi

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ:
Children of Gebelawi
Translated by Philip Stewart
355pp. Heinemann. £3.50.
0 435 90225 3

Few people will deny that the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz is the leading novelist in the Arab world, or that he is the most significant figure to have arisen this century in the history of the Arabic novel. Yet, paradoxically, of all writers he is perhaps the most peculiarly Egyptian in sensibility, outlook and background – and that despite the underlying universality of the themes in many of his works. Other Arab novelists who produce works of literary merit appear from time to time, both in Egypt and elsewhere, but few write more than one or two truly interesting novels, and certainly no one has approached in output, variety, originality and seriousness Mahfouz's achievement.

Born in 1911 in the old quarter of Cairo, al-Gamaliyya, the setting of several of his novels, Mahfouz began to publish as early as 1934, soon after he graduated in philosophy from the secular university in Cairo. He began with popular articles on philosophy and the history of ideas, together with short stories, and subsequently turned to writing novels. It was not, however, until 1957, with the publication of his trilogy, that he received the acclaim he deserved. For two decades he continued to toil over his fiction in relative obscurity – his friends gave him the nickname *Sabir*, alluding to his infinite patience, and his perseverance in devoting his spare time to writing (since for most of his life he worked to earn his living as a civil servant).

Mahfouz began his career as a novelist with historical fiction, publishing three novels in the genre between 1939 and 1944. In these works, the imaginative reconstruction of the ancient Egyptian past is less important than Mahfouz's use of the distant Pharaonic setting as a vehicle for commentary on the political and social situation of contemporary Egypt. In this he succeeded to some extent: there is implied criticism of the tyranny of King Farouk in *Radubis* and a pronounced feeling of nationalist resentment against the foreign (and hence British) occupation of Egypt in *Thebes' Struggle*. However, Mahfouz soon abandoned Pharaonic times for the contemporary Egyptian and specifically Cairene setting. This was a wise decision, not least because he was ill-suited to the historical novel. His next work, *Khan al-Khalili* (1945), began a series of eight novels in which he emerged as the master *par excellence* of the Egyptian realistic novel, the chronicler of twentieth-century Egypt, and its most vocal social and political conscience. With titles taken from the names of streets of old Cairo, the novels offer a panoramic vista of the Egyptian lower and lower-middle classes, with the minute details of their daily lives vividly and lovingly portrayed. Unlike Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria, Mahfouz's Cairo has more than mere romantic imaginative validity: it is a recognizable physical presence, its powerful impact upon the lives of characters is as memorable as that of Dickens's London, Dostoevsky's St Petersburg or Zola's Paris.

Mahfouz's realistic art reaches its pinnacle in his trilogy, published in 1956-57, but clearly written before the 1952 Revolution. The earlier novels, *Khan al-Khalili* (1945), *New Cairo* (1946), *Midaq Alley* (1947) (available in English translation), and *A Beginning and an End* (1951) deal in the main with the pressures and drama of life in Egypt during the Second World War. The trilogy, on the other hand, *Bayn al-Qasrayn*, *Qasr al-Shawq* and *al-Sukkariyya*, traces the fortunes of a Cairene family over three generations, beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century, roughly coinciding with the growth of the nationalist movement that culminated in the 1919 revolution, and ending with the Second World War. The destinies of the individual characters are the microcosm, but the macrocosm is the destiny of modern Egypt. The tragedies, the sufferings, the conflicts of the men and women who people these novels reflect the larger social, intellectual and political changes in one significant part of the modern Arab world. The struggle of the younger generation to attain their domestic freedom, to shape their own lives, mirrors the nation's struggle to achieve political independence and to free itself from the shackles of outworn and debilitating, almost medieval conventions in a gigantic endeavour to become part of the modern world. The slow unfolding of events, the meticulous enumeration of detail, the heavy sociological documentation, the constant authorial presence, the anxious concern to produce a tightly knit plot, the scrupulous care to maintain an objective stance, give these novels, despite their unmistakable Egyptian character, the air of nineteenth-century European fiction. To the criticism that they took no account of modernist techniques, Mahfouz replied that, although he was not unaware of Modernism, he felt that technique was determined by the writer's material and vision of life, and was not something to be imposed arbitrarily from without. Herein lies Mahfouz's strength: unlike lesser writers he has never been dazzled by the latest literary fashion.

Between the completion of the trilogy and the appearance of *The Children of Gebelawi* in 1959 (now available in a very able translation by Philip Stewart), Mahfouz wrote nothing for more than five years, a silence all the more baffling in view of the prolific output of earlier and later years. His own recorded explanation is that with the coming of the Nasser Revolution he felt he had nothing further to say, since it was pointless to continue to criticize the *ancien régime*. But clearly the novelist must have experienced something of a spiritual crisis, partly responsible for the change in emphasis, form and theme which occurred in his work when it was later resumed. *The Children of Gebelawi* (in Arabic: *Awlad Haratina*) is one of the few allegorical novels in Arabic. The events, true enough, still take place in Cairo, but unlike the earlier novels, which are set in a particular place and at a particular juncture in modern Egyptian history, *The Children of Gebelawi* evokes the *general* atmosphere of Old Cairo, in an almost timeless period, although it is clearly before the nineteenth century. The timelessness is perhaps appropriate, since the theme is, in fact, the whole of human history and man's quest for religion from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, right down to the last of the prophets, the modern man of science, the man indirectly responsible for the death of their ancestor, Gebelawi, the Mountain Man, who clearly stands for God. These figures are given thinly disguised Arabic names which, together with a brief outline of the main events in their lives, immediately reveal their true identity. They are portrayed as the heroes of an imaginary alley who, from time to time rise up in rebellion against the violent tyranny of the *status quo*. Structurally it is an interesting work: instead of the slow tempo of the earlier novels we have in effect a number of very fast-moving short *nouvelles*, held together by means of certain parallelisms and continuities and, of course, one unifying concept. Significantly, the novel is divided into 114 chapters, the same number as that of the chapters or *suras* of the Koran, a feature which in this context cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence: Mahfouz here is giving modern man's view of the stories of prophecy narrated in the Koran.

Yet although *The Children of Gebelawi* deals primarily with metaphysical questions such as the nature of evil and the meaning of life, the moments of spiritual illumination or religious ecstasy are few and far between. The driving force behind all the prophets is not so much the sense of man's essential need for God's comfort in a frighteningly insecure universe, as a keen awareness of social injustice and the evil perpetrated by man against man. In this respect *The Children of Gebelawi* forms a link with the rest of Mahfouz's work. On the other hand, even in his sociological novels Mahfouz's philosophical preoccupations, no doubt the product of his early intellectual formation, are never entirely absent. The conflict between science and religion, and the influence of Auguste Comte's logical positivism are clearly marked in his early writings, particularly in the character of Kamal Abd al-Jawwad in the trilogy. And it is this interpenetration of the philosophical/religious and the social, political and psychological that gives Mahfouz's novels, particularly his later works, their peculiar resonance and richness of texture, their many layers of meaning.

For Mahfouz went on to write more, and much greater, novels after *The Children of Gebelawi*, which constitutes an impressive, though imperfect, landmark in the development of his art as a novelist (in fact, more than twenty volumes of short stories and novels have appeared since 1959). As a novel *The Children of Gebelawi* suffers from serious defects: it is too repetitive, too full of fighting, too fast-moving, too thickly populated to allow for convincing characterization and, for a work on man's religious quest, it is too explicitly prosaic and lacking in the poetic spirit. Its interest lies chiefly on the level of themes and ideas, although its message is not exactly redolent of hope. Yet its spiritual preoccupations, its existentialist terror of death, point forward to future works. The next novel Mahfouz published was *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961), which marked the beginning of a new phase of shorter novels concentrating on one protagonist, more dramatic in nature, more lyrical in style, more subtly symbolical in mode, employing stream-of-consciousness techniques as well as other modernistic devices in keeping with the nature of their subject. In them we have the poetry of realism, an indissoluble mixture of the political, the psychological, the metaphysical and the mystical. In several, notably in *The Beggar* (1965) and *Chit-Chat on the Nile* (1966), the obsessive spiritual quest leads to disturbing states of consciousness in which the borderline between illusion and reality is blurred and the distinction between past and present obliterated. Yet, despite their metaphysical dimension, they provide an eloquent and sensitive index to the mood and temper of Egypt since Nasser's revolution. It is a pity that hardly any of these important novels have so far been translated into English, although it must be admitted that they pose severe problems to the translator.

Mahfouz once described the development of his art, analogically but with tongue in cheek, as a journey from Scott to Sarraute. In a sense, albeit a limited one, this is true; but Barclays influences on his writing, whether in his realistic or in his existentialist phase, have, on the whole, been of a very general nature and not easily attributable to this single Western author or that. Throughout, his novels have remained profoundly Egyptian. And a cursory look at his more recent work will show that this gifted writer's experimentation with the novel form is by no means over.

In *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900* (838pp. Princeton: Darwin Press. $24.95. 0 87850 030 8), A. L. Udovitch has assembled a collection of essays to present a conspectus of the social and economic history of the region. The volume forms part of the Princeton Studies on the Near East Series and derives from a seminar held at that university in 1974.

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Controlling the Controller

By Richard Osborne

ROBERT SIMPSON:
The Proms and Natural Justice
A Plan for Renewal
66pp. Toccata Press. £1.95.
0 907689 00 0

Those of us who have been attending or hearing the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts over recent weeks may be surprised by the sub-title of Robert Simpson's monograph. "A Plan for Renewal" may have rung true twenty-five years ago but in the midst of an enterprising and substantially successful season it sounds uncommonly like a plea for the cleansing of the Augean stables shortly after Hercules' visit.

Nonetheless, Dr Simpson is a distinguished musician and his case has been widely noticed. In essence, it is that he finds it "morally indefensible" that one person should control Prom planning for an indefinite period of time. From this tendentious beginning a blueprint for reform is derived, based primarily on the concept of a limited-term external appointee and the strategic and more or less exclusive use of the five BBC house orchestras for the Promenade season.

There is more to the matter, though, than this; for what Simpson's monograph charts, in a bewildering mix of ethics and musicology, is an old-fashioned power struggle bred over the years by the competing pressures within the musical profession itself. With the BBC management cast in the role of a cryptically disinterested Renaissance ruler, Simpson sets the stage for a drama in which the decent graft of informed professionals is subject, unprotected, to the whims of libertine entrepreneurs. Simpson versus Glock is a bit like Shylock versus Antonio. As *in all* such power struggles there is a good deal of moral posturing, and nothing is more alarming, in Simpson's case, than the resort, from the title onwards, to fuzzily defined ethics.

The origin of the problem is the appointment of William Glock to the BBC's position of Controller, Music, in 1958 and Glock's own immediate assumption of responsibility for all the BBC's live music-making in London, including the Proms. Glock, it is conceded in one of the oddest sentences in the book, "had no doubt (*sic*) snatched the Proms from a fate worse than death". He is nonetheless pictured in Simpson's dramatic scenario as a man agonizing over the moral impropriety of his holding so influential a post until death or retirement intervened. Simpson's "moral indefensibility" is, however, an adaptable phenomenon, for on page 5 of his book he asserts that Sir Henry Wood "was fond in my view remains) the only man to have the right (sic) to bear it singly". A first-year philosophy course or, perhaps, an evening with Tillich's *Love, Power, and Justice* might have strengthened, if not Simpson's case, then at least the accuracy of the terms in which he chooses to formulate it.

It is disconcerting to find Simpson cast in such a role. A distinguished composer and the author of several notable books (his *The Essence of Bruckner* the kind of thing only a fellow-composer could have written), he is a formidable musical analyst. Yet there is in *The Proms and Natural Justice* a persistently disingenuous note. At one point there appears a list of twenty-one composers of whom Simpson personally approves who found no place in the Prom programmes in the Glock years. Seven of the composers appear to have escaped the notice of the recording companies, too; but that is hardly material alongside the larger point that such a list would have carried greater weight had it been supplemented by the names of those composers whom Glock did introduce. I sense a disingenuous note, too, in Simpson's statement that he has "no personal stake in the matter". A good deal of his case has been fomented, one suspects, by a body with which he is, not unnaturally, connected: The Composers' Guild of Great Britain. On the principle that three throws of the dice are better than one, the Guild clearly would have preferred three planners to one between 1958 and 1973. (On page 53 Simpson openly states that Benjamin Frankel's chances would no doubt have been improved had anyone other than Glock been Proms planner in that period.) In suggesting the replacement of the BBC's Controller, Music, as Proms planner by a short-term external appointee, Simpson is, of course, proposing a scheme in which such Guilds, Associations and other pressure groups with partial aims would be expected to have a decisive say.

This, though, is by no means the most sinister aspect of the proposals Simpson lays before us. His additional plan, one which involves substantial financial savings, is to base the Proms more or less exclusively upon the BBC's five house orchestras, an arrangement which would give his new-style planner unparalleled autonomy in the shaping of the Promenade Concert repertoire.

Naturally, in proposing so radical a scheme Simpson is obliged to set about defending the quality of the BBC's provincial orchestras. Quoting Furtwangler's remark, that there are no bad orchestras, only bad conductors, he points to what many of us have experienced: the radio transmission which we have joined midway, admired, and discovered to be the work not of the Berlin Philharmonic but the BBC Welsh. Unhappily, it is a case which doesn't entirely cohere. Putting aside the evident falseness of the concept that all orchestras are equal before God and their conductors, there is the additional point that radio transcriptions are not the same as concert-hall listening and the further (and decisive) point that it is not possible to apply the productive principle of "the innocent ear" in the course of live concert-going. However one may dislike star conductors (Simpson, like many of his fellows, seems to distrust them deeply), a Giulini account of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* is undeniably an event. Radio orchestras have, in recent times, given exceptional service: one thinks of the pioneering work of English and German radio orchestras under men like Horenstein, Rosbaud, and Boulez. There have been the examples of Kleiber in Cologne, Fricsay in Berlin, and Jochum in Munich. But who, one must ask, is going to the BBC in Manchester or Cardiff except as a stepping-stone? It is highly uncertain that these orchestras could produce the "magnificent" concerts Simpson envisages. But then, their role in his plan is ultimately more strategic than musical.

There is, in fact, something Corbusier-like about Simpson's concept of the totally planned Prom environment, built out of neutral, malleable materials, and shorn of all redundant capitalist chic. At one point, the image of the architect is actually invoked. "The Prom planner would be nearer the architect than ever before", Simpson wistfully declares. Like all planners, he is much enamoured of abstract "themes", imperceptible to the nightly audience but splendid to contemplate on the planner's desk – symphony cycles, cycles of "unduly neglected works", works related by "the same or similar poetry and philosophy", and so on. Elsewhere, inadvertently or not, Simpson's vocabulary strays into a recognizably Eastern European strain. We read of "marshalling", of "total command", of the provincial orchestras' tours abroad as "useful propaganda" for English orchestral standards. It is even posited that the Prommers might be taught some manners. As is so often the case, what emerges is a blueprint, not for liberation and renewal, but for a tyranny more rigorous than anything imposed by Glock's brilliant opportunism or the imaginative, enterprising, and doggedly fair-minded work of his successor, Robert Ponsonby.

Ironically, Simpson's vital principle of "programme first, performer second" is one which, in decent measure, the Proms appear still to follow. It is the once innovatory Edinburgh Festival (which is run on Simpson's principle of a director appointed on a short-term contract) which has been forced by financial and commercial pressures to break with this admirable ideal. For who can doubt that the liturgically dubious decision to open this year's Festival with the *St Matthew Passion* was determined by anything other than Abbado's desire to tackle the work in a suitably prestigious international forum? And who, looking at this year's Edinburgh programme, can but conclude that the Proms offer incomparably the richer musical fare?

I have left till last, though, one of the most worrying aspects of Simpson's monograph. Though he refers at one point to the Reithian concept of "music for all", it is clear from the tone of his remarks on the English amateur and the so-called "man in the street" that he has little time for either. His own ideal Prom planner would be a composer, a performer, or a scholar rather than an impresario or administrator. (In this Simpson seriously underestimates the impresario's role from Salomon to, in our own day, a man like Ian Hunter.) Yet nowhere in the main body of the book do we sense any real awareness of the person whom Aaron Copland nominates, in *Music and Imagination*, as being the most important of all: the listener. It is only in his final chapter, a postscript entitled "The Composer and the Audience", that Simpson, writing now as a composer rather than as a would-be reformer, addresses himself to this party.

In the postscript, Simpson bemoans the modern composer's lack of easy rapport with his audience. Where Haydn, working in the Esterhazy court, could shock, amuse or move old so-and-so, and where Bach knew his weekly congregation and choir, the modern composer is isolated from his fellows. Attempting to recreate Haydn's "enviable condition without the servitude" (one notes the persistent paranoia about institutions), Simpson has asked a close friend to describe to him the kind of symphony he would like to hear. It seems an odd solution, symptomatic of the peculiar uncertainty in matters of communication which appears to hedge in many of our contemporary composers. It is possible, though, to be more sanguine about this proposal than about many others in this contentious pamphlet.

In *The Book of the Piano* (288pp. Phaidon. £19.50. 0 7148 2036 9), Dominic Gill has assembled a collection of essays by musicologists and musicians on the instrument most widely played in the history of Western Music. Gill's aim is to provide a comprehensive, illustrated study of the piano, of its designers, of the composers who have written for it and of the pianists who have played it. The *Book of the Piano* contains contributions from Nicholas Kenyon on "The Classical Piano", Charles Rosen and David Murray on "The Romantic Pedal" and "The Romantic Piano", Martin Cooper on "The Chamber Piano", William Brooks on "The Piano in the Twentieth Century" and Wilfrid Mellers on "The Jazz Piano". The Basuto percussive pianist Dollar Brand, describes the diverse influences which have shaped his vision of the piano as intermediary between the musician as healer and his audience.

Dramaturgical schemes

By Martin Cooper

JOHN DRUMMOND:
Opera in Perspective
383pp. Dent. £17.50.
0 460 04294 7

The author of this comprehensive study is Blair Professor of Music at the University of Otago, New Zealand, and he here provides his more ambitious students with a vision of the part played by music-drama in human existence as well as a history of opera so-called. He goes back as far as Neanderthal man and as far into the present as "Jesus Christ Superstar", observing Nietzsche's distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian elements but clear-sighted in marking their inextricable confusion in most of the music that he discusses. He writes well of Euripides' *Bacchae* and compares this irruption of Dionysian art, and the resentment that it aroused, to the pop-music and much of the avant-garde to-day. The Middle Ages are well, if rather scantly represented by studies of the Mass and the mystery-plays, but it is not until opera emerges as such in the late sixteenth century that John Drummond's studies become more detailed and more technical in character, with a good supply of well-chosen examples.

He has wisely chosen some half-dozen works by which to characterize and exemplify types of drama and dramaturgical procedures – Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Handel's *Rodelinda*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Peter Grimes*. Even those students of opera who may have found the earlier, more general and philosophical/anthropological chapters hard going, will learn a great deal from these individual studies. They are factual, with points illustrated by ample quotation, including diagrams that reveal real relationships and are not included simply in order to give the text a fashionable look. Drummond's general observations on the Romantic opera of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are often excellent and reveal an intelligence whose powers of analysis are by no means confined to filleting scores. He finds, for example, an interesting point of contact between late seventeenth-century madrigal, Italian *opera seria* and the French grand opera. All this music, he points out, portrays emotion, but does not express it: we believe Meyerbeer's characters but we do not believe in them. Speaking of Rossini, he observes that "intensity of expression within simple structures [and he quotes "Ahi venisse il caro oggetto" from the *Barbiere*] is no substitute for dramatic truth. It holds our attention on the surface, but in the end prevents us from penetrating beyond". His analysis of the last act of *Rigoletto* contains a rather extravagant quotation of the whole quartet, welcome of course but not strictly necessary. I prefer (though I confess it made me laugh) his clever schematic analysis of Weber's key-associations in *Der Freischütz* (figuring a Maltese cross) and especially the ingenious scheme of the Wolf's Glen music, in which the casting of each bullet is shown to have its proper key in the overall scheme.

Professor Drummond does not offer any suggestion as to how opera is to be kept alive, rightly regarding this as primarily a financial problem; but if his book proves to be something in the nature of an extended obituary notice, it is a handsome and valuable one.

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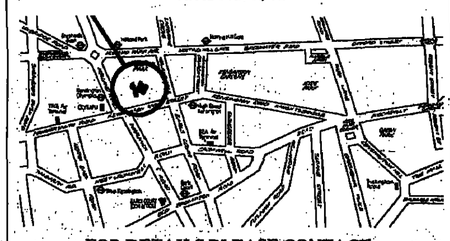
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Turbulent times at Devonshire House

By A. N. Wilson

BRIAN MASTERS:
Georgiana
Duchess of Devonshire
324pp. Hamish Hamilton. £15.
0 241 10662 1

When Lord Spencer's daughter left Althorp to begin her illustrious married life, she was too young for any of her undeveloped inner qualities of wisdom and courage to be apparent to the world. Yet her niceness and good humour shone out from the first and caught the immediate imagination of society. "Her youth, figure, flowing good nature, sense and lively modesty and modest familiarity make her a phenomenon", Horace Walpole wrote of Lady Georgiana Spencer in that first year of her marriage to the fifth Duke of Devonshire in 1774.

The story goes on being phenomenal in almost every sense of the word. No novel by Fanny Burney, no satirical farce by Sheridan, can ever convey, as the letter and diaries of the period do, that dazzling, scandalous, ebullient, passionate, wretched and prodigiously opulent atmosphere of Whig high society towards the close of the eighteenth century. Lord David Cecil was to write in his life of Melbourne, "life at Devonshire House was a continual strain on the spirit; beneath its shifting surfaces seethed always a turmoil of yearning and jealousy, crisis and intrigue, gnawing hope and unavailing despair". Brian Masters has chosen a subject, one would have supposed, who lived at the very centre of that turmoil; and he has done nothing to dispel Lord David's rather austere point of view. But he has enormously enriched it. With a wealth of new manuscript material and with a brilliant "feel" for the period, he superbly depicts the warmth of heart as well as the social brilliance of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.

The future George IV called her "sister"; Charles James Fox was her devoted friend (she campaigned for him during the famous election of 1784, giving kisses to the people of London in exchange for votes); she was one of the most widely-loved figures of the age, and, having read Mr Masters's book, anyone could see why. "In all the diaries, journals, letters of the period, there is not one unkind word about the Duchess of Devonshire", he writes. And although his book has all the lightness of touch of a popular romance, and all the elegance of the old-fashioned belle-lettre, that sentence has the ring of authority. There can be few diaries, journals or letters in this period which he has not read. And many of the materials lightly quoted in the course of his narrative are from sources as yet unpublished, in the archives of Chatsworth, or Castle Howard, or the British Museum.

It would have been hard, though, to spoil a biography of Georgiana. It is such a wonderful story. She was hardly seventeen when she married that languid duke. "Constitutional apathy", wrote Wraxall, "formed his distinguishing characteristic. His figure was tall and manly, though not animated or graceful; his manners always calm and unruffled. He seemed incapable of strong emotion, and destitute of all energy or activity of mind." This lethargic nobleman was only twenty-four, and it could easily have been said of him, as it was of his uncle Henry, that "he uttered fewer words in the course of his life than any man who ever lived to fourscore years, not at all excepting the monks of La Trappe". He idled his nights away at the gambling tables of Brooks's Club, and his days asleep, or playing with dogs, or womanizing. Unknown to his young bride, he became the father of his first illegitimate child shortly after his wedding. When, some years later, Georgiana discovered this child's existence, she immediately adopted her as her own, with no apparent trace of resentment. It is only in societies which truly revere the marriage bond that adultery and fornication can be so vigorously enjoyed.

Mr Masters is deft in his exposition of the sexual *mores* of the Devonshire House set:

> That a marriage should be founded on something as unreliable as the momentary preference of one human being for another would have seemed to them the ultimate folly. Marriage was far too serious an undertaking for that. It was essential that rank should be protected, so that a liaison between a peer's daughter and a footman was perfectly all right while it remained the satisfaction of lust or romance, but totally inconceivable if it threatened to become a life partnership. Once the purity of rank had been assured by a proper marriage, the next essential was to produce an heir. That done, almost anything was permissible.

It was a code which, at various stages of her life, brought poor Georgiana much unhappiness. When the time came for her to fall in love, and she was disingenuous enough to confess that the father of her daughter Eliza was Lord Grey, the Duke banished her to the Continent for fourteen months, separating her from her legitimate as well as her unlawful offspring; (and this in spite of the fact that three of his six children were born to women other than his wife). Earlier in the marriage, Georgiana had the greatest difficulty in producing the requisite male heir, which she did after two girls and a number of miscarriages.

History has been inclined to doubt whether Georgiana were really the mother of "Hart" – Lord Hartington, who succeeded as sixth Duke in 1811. Certainly the circumstances of his birth were singular. Instead of a stately confinement at Devonshire House or Chatsworth, a fitting place for the birth of the future Duke, his mother found herself stuck in France at the very height of the Revolution. Moreover, Lady Elizabeth Foster, the fifth Duke's mistress, was also giving birth at the same time and place, to a baby who turned out to be a girl. They all passionately wanted a male heir. What could have been easier than, as in some comic opera, to swap the infants about?

Witnesses to such events are of necessity few; and posterity likes to believe a calumny. So it is all the more cheering that Mr Masters, like the old gipsy who rushes in during the last scene of the opera, has painstakingly established the legitimacy of the sixth Duke's birth. He believes in the honesty of Richard Croft, the doctor who delivered the little marquess, and he produces a letter, written by Croft on the very day of the delivery to his own mother in England. "Her Grace's labour came on pretty violent, and after one of the best times I ever attended, she was delivered, at one o'clock this morning, of a remarkable fine boy". Mr Masters adds that there is no reason to suppose that the doctor is lying. Nor there is. Poor Croft's reputation suffered quite irrationally, and much later, when he attended the confinement of Princess Charlotte in 1817, and was blamed for her death in childbed. Public rage against the poor man was so vociferous that he took his own life. But none of this has anything to do with the alleged jiggery-pokery twenty-seven years before. With the assistance of Croft's descendant, Richard Page Croft, Mr Masters has managed to restore the reputation of this much-maligned physician; and, in so doing, to restore faith in Georgiana's maternity of the sixth Duke. It is a matter of fairly peripheral importance, since the sixth Duke failed to produce any heirs at all; the present Duke of Devonshire's descent from Georgiana is coincidental, and through the female line.

If the legitimacy of "Hart" is the clearest "problem", in detective-story terms, facing Georgiana's biographer, Mr Masters has solved it. But he is equally subtle in unravelling the much more intricate story of Georgiana's emotional life. As is well known, although she was the gayest and most popular hostess of the 1780s and 90s, a brilliant gossip and letter writer, and a close friend of most of the great men and women of the day, Georgiana's marriage was, initially at least, aridly miserable. She was all spontaneity, effervescence, good humour; her duke was a man of painful taciturnity, incapable of expressing emotions and not having many to express.

But the complexion of life changed when Georgiana became infatuated with Lady Elizabeth Foster, daughter of the fourth Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, the figure after whom so many continental hotels are named and who, after a cruel and dissipated life, was conveyed back to his diocese in a box labelled "Antique sculpture". His tiresome daughter Lady Elizabeth, "my dearest loveliest, dearest Bess", as Georgiana not uneffusively called her, was soon adopted as a permanent part of the household. Nor was it long before she had also been adopted by the Duke as an alternative bedfellow to his duchess. With her characteristic niceness, Georgiana seemed able to accept this, and Mr Masters conveys with great delicacy both what friendship the three of them enjoyed, and at the same time what unspoken strains it must have imposed upon the Duchess. She was, moreover, hideously prone to sickness and to debt. Her addiction to the gambling tables led to frantic and furtive borrowings which do her memory small credit. When "Hart" came of age, five years after his mother's death, Thomas Coutts the banker presented him with a bill for £28,286.

This was, of course, chicken-feed when mensured by the standards of the Cavendish millions. Since she was married to one of the richest men not only in the kingdom but in history, Georgiana's perpetual agonizing over gaming debts makes sad reading. When the Duke heard of them after her death he exclaimed, "Was that all? Why, oh why did she not tell me?"

"Telling" things to that silent man was not the easiest matter in the world. She kept her gambling losses a secret as people would some sexual or alcoholic aberration. She was no mere enthusiast for the tables. Even by the standards of that passionately gambling generation, Georgiana's bets were those of an addict. Like all addicts, she was bitterly ashamed of her enslavement. It led to all kinds of petty dishonesty.

As the tale reaches its conclusion, the reader feels increasing affection and sadness for Georgiana. She grew corpulent and coarse. She had never quite possessed the beauty attributed to her by Gainsborough and Reynolds, but the doctors insured that in her last days she should be hideous. They cut out one of her eyes; then they shaved her head. Her courage was unwavering; so was her affection for her children. And she was decent enough, one might say Christian enough, to leave us all in ignorance of how she felt about being supplanted in the affections of her best friend and of her husband by the strains and chances of that bizarre *ménage à trois*.

"A better heart no one ever had" commented Mrs Fox on the day that Georgiana died. She could not have hoped for a more elegantly made biography in our day; nor one more punctilious in its genealogical grasp, more solid in its historical truth, more incisive in its human sympathy.

Needlewomen in need

By Phyllis M. Palmer

CHRISTINA WALKLEY:
The Ghost in the Looking Glass
The Victorian Seamstress
137pp. Peter Owen. £12.50.
0 7206 0561 X

The ideal Victorian woman cared for parents, husband, children and deserving poor, prepared tea for the local clergyman, and embroidered purses for the annual charity bazaar. This "Angel in the House", according to Coventry Patmore's 1845 poem, represented "the fair sum of six thousand years'/Tradition of civility". Her existence in England, the reader might infer, was ample justification for the nation's power; female propriety was the stimulus and symbol of progress.

Victorian images of womanhood held not only sunshine, however, but also shadows. Only two years earlier, in the 1843 Christmas issue of *Punch*, Thomas Hood had powerfully stimulated the magazine's circulation with another poetic heroine's picture, that of the seamstress, who stitched "In poverty, hunger and dirt /Sewing at once...with a double thread,/A shroud as well as a shirt". The extraordinary impact of Hood's "Song of the Shirt" depended upon a melodramatic dualism prevalent in Victorian taste: expensive elegance contrasted with ill-paid drudgery.

The seamstress, like the governess and teacher who also inspired Victorian novelists and painters, was a poignant figure because she was forced to sell – at very low wages – what most fortunate women gave to their families and friends for love: skills as a needlewoman and care for the young, weak and feeble. Working at the quintessentially female occupation of sewing, she made goods not for charity and kin, but for wages and the benefit of manufacturers.

For the middle-class family who bought journals and prints, the sad story of the seamstress provided various imaginative satisfactions. It emphasized the happy lot of the housewife through vicarious experience of poverty and grief; it applauded the husband or father whose income protected "his" women from such hardships; and it mildly titillated the entire family with its implication that the vulnerable, unprotected woman might fall even further – into the last desperate risk of prostitution. A decent income was salvation, expressed in its keeping women pure and men decent. For the Victorian audience, the seamstress's life was a vision of the hell that financial loss could bring: a nineteenth-century secular version of Dante.

Victorian fiction reveals much about the terrain of the mental landscape, but less about the actual geography of work. This disjunction between literary and historical fact is well understood by literary critics and social historians, but not, I fear, by Christina Walkley. Her work as costume custodian and author of a book on the cleaning and care of Victorian clothes seems not to have prepared her for writing about either the symbolic functions of the seamstress or the economics of clothes production.

In eight thin chapters, she runs through the middle-class Victorian view of the seamstress problem – from women attempting to earn a wage in the low-paid work of making dresses, skirts and trousers, through the discovery that low wages led to prostitution, to supplement income, to the efforts of charitable agencies to match up distressed needlewomen with better-paying employers or to encourage the emigration of "surplus" women to Australia, to the unremarkable conclusion that the garment trade still exploits women – though less so because women now have more jobs to choose among.

The evidence for these chapters consists of stories and pictures presented as accurate and unbiased accounts. Although the illustrations are well chosen – from the much-discussed Royal Academy exhibit of 1846, Richard Redgrave's "The Sempstress", to John Everett Millais's "Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!" of 1876 – and although they reveal the moral-aesthetic pathos of the seamstress theme, they do not, of course, depict economic conditions. The author uses some standard sources – such as the 1849-50 *Morning Chronicle* reports of Henry Mayhew, impeccably edited some years ago by E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo; the 1842 and 1864 Parliamentary reports of Commissions on the Employment of Children; and the novels of Mrs Gaskell and Charles Kingsley. But Walkley offers little of her own, and leans heavily upon recent scholarly work, such as T. J. Edelstein's article, "They Sang the 'Song of the Shirt'; The Visual Iconology of the Seamstress" in *Victorian Studies* (Winter, 1980).

A single incident which Walkley recounts at length – the inspiration, indeed, for the *Punch* engraving reproduced on the dust-jacket of a lady trying on her new dress in a looking-glass that reflects a ghostly seamstress – exemplifies the author's uncritical approach. The story is of Mary Anne Walkley (any relation to the author?), a dressmaker in the London house of "Madame Elise" of Regent Street, where Mary Anne died in 1863. Christina Walkley opens the account with the text of an anonymous letter to *The Times*, which charged Mary Anne's supposedly callous employers with her death, claiming that they provided only an airless attic for sleeping and worked the women long hours. This is followed by the owners' long rebuttal to *The Times*, testimony from other workers collected by the 1864 Parliamentary Commission, and a denunciatory article by the *English-woman's Domestic Review*, which objected as much to the employers' misuse of grammar as to their abuse of their employees. The tale ends with the firm being exonerated and going on to become dressmakers to Princess Alexandra.

Christina Walkley provides neither historical or cultural context to explain the significance of this little case. Certainly we may gather that dressmakers were overworked and undervalued, but in relation to whom and to what other employment? The lives of dressmakers differed starkly from those of the leisured women who wore their gowns, but they enjoyed higher incomes and status than shirt- and trouser-makers, that much larger group of seamstresses who laboured for middlemen in the ready-made-clothing trade. One suspects that the reality of hardship derives from women in sloshop production, while the image of deprivation came from the contrast between a small group of élite needlewomen and the even smaller group of women whose dresses they made. But we cannot pursue these speculations with the information Christina Walkley provides.

A thorough study of either the imaginative uses or the economic position of the seamstress would make a good book. Edelstein's article is a beginning of the former, and for information about the place of the seamstress in the nineteenth-century industrial economy, one can turn to Virago Press's reprint of Ivy Pinchbeck's classic *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution* (1930). As Pinchbeck's data indicate, the occupation of seamstress was less important for the number of women involved (fewer than in agriculture, domestic service and textile-mill work) than it was figuratively or metaphorically. The interrelation of these is a fascinating subject, but Walkley's account barely hints at the existence of such rich complexities.

The couch-side manner

By Rosemary Dinnage

PETER LOMAS:
The Case for a Personal Psychotherapy
152pp. Oxford University Press. £9.50.
0 19 217680 3

ANTHONY W. CLARE with SALLY THOMPSON:
Let's Talk About Me
253pp. BBC. Paperback, £4.50.
0 563 17887 6

In *The Case for a Personal Psychotherapy* Peter Lomas is concerned to answer the question, "What does it mean to be natural in the therapeutic session?" Lucidly and scrupulously he makes out a case against the rule-bound, technological model of therapy that, in different ways, tends to be adopted equally by psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, and assorted psychotherapists; it is in fact unpretentious friendship and warmth, he argues, that actually cures people. He discusses the obfuscating effect of technical jargon and the damage done by labelling patients (the patient with "hysteria" or "inadequate" hung round his neck is as well aware of it as the child in the C-stream); and ponders the problem of working informally and kindly without acquiring the delusion that one has unlimited love for every patient. The technicalities of "transference" interpretation, he argues, may in fact exist more to shelter the therapist from this kind of problem than to benefit the patient. His own method is to convey to a patient that "we need to work out an acceptable way of being with each other so that, by and large, *I* will try to help *you* but everything else between us is in question".

Lomas has already made some of these points in his earlier book *True and False Experience*, and the average reader may find them a little bland; everyone, after all, is against sin. Warmth, kindness, sincerity: would one expect less from a therapeutic helper when in trouble? Since Lomas is not an aggressive critic like, for instance, Thomas Szasz, it is not until he quotes from the kind of thing he objects to that his arguments gain force. "To the patient's smiles and small talk," says a writer in a prestigious psychoanalytic journal, "the analyst firmly and tenaciously offers a particular, specific reception. He maintains the necessary distance unchanged, he deliberately keeps the stereotyped solemnity of the encounter. He answers most remarks of the patient with silence, parsimonious replies, or the calculated tone of interpretation ...". Tremendously jolly, when you're feeling low (though, to be fair, not all analysts are as rigid). There was a psychoanalyst-in-training, Lomas relates, who laughed with his patient when she asked "Is this the hot seat?" and was severely reprimanded by his supervisor for "colluding with her defences" (the defence being to make a little joke, and it does seem to explain why Woody Allen's analysis has taken twenty-two years). Lomas also quotes a patient of his own, on the reason why she left her previous therapist. She had woken in the night, heard rain, and thought with pleasure that it would water Dr X's garden and make his flowers grow; but when she told him about this (to her) important feeling, he ignored it.

One only needs to glance through the solemn discussions in professional journals on whether it is correct for analysts to shake hands, exchange Christmas cards, condole on bereavements, or whatever, to see that Lomas is not being bland, but rather radical, since with his own patients he discusses his rheumatism, lends books, offers lifts. Only recently Anthony Storr, in another book telling therapists how to therapeut, justified the need for impersonality by quoting an incident when a patient was so shocked by Storr's straight answer to the question "Have you ever masturbated?" that he never came back – yet Lomas describes his patients as being relieved to get a quite detailed rundown of his own problems. It is all very rum – not least that a conventional therapist may come across as quite kind and an informal one as the opposite. It would seem – though Lomas's points are entirely valid – that helpers can do good work by whatever methods feel right to them.

Conventional psychoanalysts, I think, would anyway argue that if a patient's treatment is all sweetness and light, the anger in his neurosis will get bypassed; that it must be taken out on the analyst if it is to be exorcized. Lomas is aware of this argument, but in his case-history of "Sally" claims that the emotional knots did get disentangled without her having to work through hostility against him. "Right from the start I felt you treated me as an equal, that you tried to be fair to me; I didn't feel you wanted to have power over me. You don't seem to have preconceived ideas about me, putting a label on me, you've waited to let me be myself and to see what I'm like and yet you've not been distant. I've got to know you." (One does get the impression, incidentally, that his patients are rather reasonable, un-ill people.)

Then there are other factors in the therapy situation: what about free association, poor man's poetry – does this have any place in chats across the desk about rheumatism? What about interpretation (telling the patient what he "really" means)? This is much more dispensable; the late D. W. Winnicott said that one interpretation a month was about enough, and that one only to show the patient how stupid the analyst could be. Most analysts, however, make very free with the "what-you-really-mean-is" technique. ("I don't like the colour of these walls." "What you mean is you are angry with me/it reminds you of your father's room/you are projecting your depression.") The "what-you-mean-is" can be very damaging, wipe out a patient's confidence, put him down in the manner he is probably only too used to; for what it says is, "I *know*; you don't".

One has only to observe – or be – the best-intentioned doctor, teacher, or social worker to see that there is a pervasive one-upness involved, an often unintentional drift towards arrogance, which equally creeps into psychotherapy. Lomas is deeply concerned to keep it out at any price; but it is obvious – and he admits it – that his own way of working is very demanding, and requires the therapist to balance on a knife-edge between familiarity and formality without the protective rituals that most people need. The Indian psychiatrist J. S. Neki has made the point that Westerners, therapists as well as their patients, have a fear of dependency and softness which is striking to a foreigner.

One reaction against rigidity has been the Encounter Movement (as Lomas calls it – I think it likes to be called the Human Potential Movement); but this has fallen into the opposite fault of facile and jargon-ridden optimism. Lomas is in fact too polite to put it quite like that, but Anthony Clare in *Let's Talk About Me* has no such inhibitions. An expansion of his radio talks last year, his book is an entertaining whistle-stop tour of the new therapies, from rolfing to psychodrama to Primal Scream; Dr Clare (with co-author Sally Thompson) has researched the subject's background well, and interviewed some leading figures in the movement.

The more serious part of the book is Clare's introduction, in which he traces the new movement's origins in reaction against Freud's bleak view of human nature, the elitism of the profession he founded, and the long-drawn-out verbalizations of psychoanalysis. Its founders understandably wanted to get some action into therapy; but spontaneity is an elusive thing, and the end result tends to be a lot of people "working on themselves" with religious earnestness ("What does your body feel?" is a popular question in the groups, as though it were something one brought along in a suitcase).

Clare's superior attitude, however, is really a small example of the arrogance that Lomas deplores, for with one exception it seems he never tried joining in or even sitting in as observer of the group therapies. If Bernard Levin, bless him, can make an ass of himself in the pursuit of self-improvement, then even a Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry should be prepared to get off his high horse at times. These therapies are funny, but some less so than others, and if, as Clare says, he is writing for the vast number of people who will do and pay anything to change their lives, sorting out better from worse might help them. For Clare is also strongly opposed to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, which he attacks along familiar lines. How *are* people, then, to change their lives?

Gunning for mother

By Phyllis Grosskurth

HÉLÈNE FRÉDÉRIC and MARTINE MALINSKY:
Martin
102pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £7.50.
0 7100 0814 7

Martin is an account of a successful child therapy, the efficacy of the treatment having been attested by the therapist, his mother and the child himself. Martin was sent to a psychotherapist at the age of four because he was uncontrollably aggressive. Some time after the treatment ended his mother, Mme Hélène Frédéric, who had been present during the sessions, wrote down her recollections, hoping they might be of help to other parents. The therapist, Dr Martine Malinsky, agreed to comment on the main stages of the treatment, and finally Martin himself, by then thirteen, added a coda to their memories.

Mme Frédéric had one daughter by a previous marriage. After remarrying happily, she had a second daughter, followed by a miscarriage. She was not told the sex of her unborn child, and was extremely depressed by the experience. On learning that she was pregnant again she at first wanted an abortion, but eventually decided against it, and after a difficult pregnancy, she gave birth to a boy.

The unfamiliarity of a boy alarmed her, and she was particularly nervous about touching his penis. Martin cried incessantly; as a three year-old he still refused unmashed food and scratched and hit people indiscriminately without provocation. In despair, his mother consulted Dr Malinsky, a disciple of Pierre Mâle, who believed that a child should not be treated in isolation, but in a mother-child relationship; hence Mme Frédéric was to form an integral part of every therapy session. Aware that she herself might be contributing to Martin's problem, she also underwent individual therapy.

In the past she had usually been preoccupied with housework when Martin wanted her attention. In therapy she discovered with amazement how interesting he was, and how impressive his awareness of family relationships. She appears to have been a highly nervous and bewildered woman, but Dr Malinsky's commentary assures us that the therapy proved successful because she had instilled in Mme Frédéric the conviction that potentially she was a good mother.

During the early sessions Martin played incessantly with guns, "killing" his mother and Dr Malinsky, and then bringing them back to life. It was weeks before he could see and began to distinguish between bad and good. At the same time his mother came to understand that her unease with Martin had created such tension that the anxious child had not been able to accept the co-existence of good and bad in his mother. Dr Malinsky helped Martin to this understanding by inducing regression, aided by games, puppets, and even by an infant's bottle. When Martin burst into the tears of a newborn baby, Dr Malinsky reminded him that he had never been able to get his bottle quickly enough, adding gently, "You know, Martin, when you were so angry that you wanted to eat Mummy, you were also afraid that Mummy would eat you. But mummies never eat their little children". Thus began the process of reparation, a process that might never have taken effect if treatment had been delayed. After this breakthrough, Martin's school-work showed astonishing progress and he played more easily with other children. In time he banished his mother to the waiting-room, and not long afterwards decided to end the therapy sessions. In Martin's final account of his impressions, the balanced youth lists his various interests and general satisfaction with life, concluding, "I really am like the others. I feel confident, happy, and free".

The eclectic method followed by Dr Malinsky, is shorter than an orthodox analysis (intensive therapy lasted for two years, but we are not told how long the bi-weekly sessions continued); and she does not seem to have sought to bring about a structural change in the child but rather a re-evaluation of attitudes on the part of both mother and son. Although unconscious material was brought to light, it is not altogether clear that, even in the incident with the bottle, the pre-genital level was explored. In view of the lack of any clearly-stated conceptual framework, and the telescoping of the time during which the various stages were worked out, one must conclude that the sessions were improvised.

Recent practitioners of child analysis have owed much to D. W. Winnicott's emphasis on the basic emotional atmosphere which surrounds the infant. But all of the many theories involved lead back ultimately to Freud who, in fact, recorded only one case-history of a child, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909). He saw the boy twice, and left his therapy in the hands of his father who reported to Freud almost daily about the child's progress. Freud was interested in the case because it enabled him to verify his ideas about infantile sexuality.

Throughout the subsequent history of child analysis techniques have been sought that would enable the child to participate fully in the analytic work. The stumbling-blocks have been its dependency on the parents, its difficulty in verbalizing, and the fact that parents seek analysis or treatment for a child because it is making *their* life intolerable. Nevertheless, as Anna Freud has pointed out, the fluid state of a child's mental structures make it possible for libido and aggressiveness to be released into new channels opened up by the analysis itself.

Around 1915 Hermine Hug-Hellmuth experimented with encouraging the child to express its problems through drawing and play. Melanie Klein in turn introduced a "world" of toys – miniature men, women, children, houses – to serve as a substitute for the free association of adult analysis. She believed that all phases of a child's play have a symbolic value and reveal unconscious phantasies to the observant analyst. Anna Freud, who by then had also entered the field, did not deny that play could be interpreted symbolically, but was wary of the efficacy of the method, emphasizing that play reveals symbolic material which in turn leads to symbolic, and hence possibly arbitrary and misleading interpretation.

Melanie Klein and Anna Freud did not agree about the importance of the parents, the purpose of analysis, the role of the analyst, or the historical development of early psychic life; nor about the more abstract issues of perception and cognition. Anna Freud's whole approach was that "in child analysis it is not the patient's ego but the parents' reason and insight on which the beginning, continuance and completion of the treatment must rely" – and hence she seems to doubt the possibility of genuine child analysis. Klein emphasized the symbiotic character of mother-infant relationships, but insisted that in the child's psychology the real mother is of less importance than the *imago* through which the mother is represented in the child's phantasy life. Her aim was to alleviate the child's anxiety by interpreting its fantasies. Within a laboratory experiment the patient's relation with the analyst could be manipulated so that it became one almost entirely of phantasy.

Anna Freud sees the child's psychic development as fluid, and its superego as weak and unstable. It is not yet an "impersonal representative of the obligations undertaken at the behest of the outer world." For Klein the infant's psychodrama consists of a conflict between introjection, which seeks to keep the good object (breast), and projection, which tries to exclude the persecutory object. The bad, devouring breast will be experienced as a feared legislator, the superego, while the introjected, good breast will form the basis of an ego-ideal. As for the parents, Melanie Klein believed that the child phantasizes its father – or his penis – as part of the mother. The child has idealized the mother as the container of everything desirable, but by projecting its aggressive tendencies on to the combined parental figure, this is transformed into a dreaded persecutor.

Young Martin clearly exhibited such aggressive anxieties, but his therapist has not indicated how she elucidated these to him. Frédéric and Malinsky's account is so short that it is unpersuasive, and full of unsolved problems, whereas Klein's *Narrative of a Child Analysis* (1961), covering ninety sessions day by day, isolated by wartime conditions, ends on a note of hope, though without facile jubilation because she realized that the analysis was incomplete. She would not have tolerated a third presence, not even a father and certainly not the au pair girl who eventually participated in Martin's sessions.

For Anna Freud the aim of analysis is to enable the child to learn which impulses are compatible with social life, which gratifications are acceptable, and what must be repressed. Convinced of the late emergence of the superego, she sees the analyst's role as an educative one in guiding the child to distinguish between the conflicting claims of the ego, id, and superego. Klein, however, sought to assess not so much the child's ability to adjust to reality as to liberate itself from the burdens of its phantasy life. Anna Freud sees cure as possible only if external factors are favourable, while Klein's insistence on the importance of phantasy leads her to insist that analysis could be successful regardless of the external situation.

Acting on history

By Rom Harré

ALAIN TOURAINE:
The Voice and the Eye
An analysis of social movements
Translated by Alan Duff
225pp. Cambridge University Press. £15.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 23874 9

This is not at all an easy book to understand, and one is not helped in understanding it by a translation which is persistently lumpish, and sometimes inept. I shall try to set out as clearly as I can what I take Touraine to be saying, but there is a further barrier to understanding: like Francis Bacon, Touraine uses the terminology of a form of theorizing which he is concerned to repudiate. It is not always clear whether he is offering a better way of using a traditional notion (say "class") or whether he is just being ironical (or dare I say it, sometimes even a bit confused himself).

The basic plot is very simple. The project of founding sociology on the assumption that there are something like natural processes in society upon which men are carried along is mistaken. Central to any understanding of what happens is a grasp of social movements. These are to be understood as the deliberate actions of actors who formulate projects and try to carry them out. These projects are essentially all of the same kind: they are struggles to gain control of "historicity". "Historicity", as I understand Touraine, is the means by which a given system of cultural interpretations of a way of life is created and maintained, and through the reproduction of which a particular field of social relations is preserved. Control of historicity is crucial since, according to Touraine, "what comes first is the work society performs on itself by inventing its norms, institutions and practices, guided by the great cultural model". Social movements are locked in struggle to control this self-reproductive process.

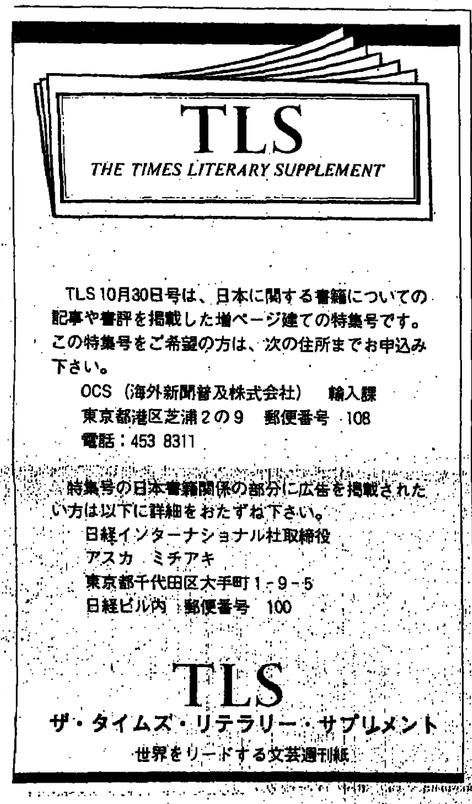
So far one can only assent. But as the theory develops some of its details bother me a good deal. Touraine takes a great deal of trouble to distance himself from both Marxist analyses (at least those that adopt simple conceptions of economic determinism) and Parsonian conceptions of abstract structure. Yet in two central respects he preserves some of the more disturbing features of those approaches. He continues to use the notion of "class" and to treat classes as individuals to which psychological attributes can be ascribed. The actors in his social movements who make decisions and work at projects, are but classes. He continues, furthermore, to talk in terms of notions like "power" and "domination", explicating "power" in terms of such naive individualistic conceptions as the authority of a foreman over a shop-floor worker. For instance he says "the social movement is the organized collective behaviour of a class actor [ie, class as actor] struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community." Touraine contrasts his idea of a sociology of social movements with the assumptions of nineteenth-century sociologies which do not have the idea of a historical actor guided by a plan. According to him social movements are culturally oriented forms of behaviour. For instance workers' movements are not uprisings, but struggles to "sell" a counter-model of industrial society. Again in explicating the notion of "struggle" he says a struggle is "all forms of organized conflictual action carried out by a collective actor against an adversary for control of a social field". The language is that of intentional action, the metaphysics that of supra-individuals whose right to have psychological attributes ascribed to them has not been established.

Even if one has no objection to the use of collective entities as theoretical foundations, nor to the metaphorical portrayal of these entities as actors, one still requires a *justification* for this way of talking. Still, there are some very interesting ideas introduced along the way. For me the most profound is the idea of "stakes". Factions and movements are imagined to be locked in struggles in which the stakes are cultural, not economic. To the victors goes, for the moment, the power to create historicity, which in the last analysis means a cultural "model" in terms of which life is made intelligible. As a consequence Touraine insists, very interestingly, that we should abandon another nineteenth-century notion, that social struggles are not only somehow natural, but are concerned with the future. Collective behaviour, he says, is not directed to or defined by some future state to be brought about, it is not for "modernizing", but for cultural hegemony *now*. Women's Lib, as a movement, is concerned to struggle for the right and the power to define womanhood now, not for some future better deal for women.

There are many echoes of the thinking of the contemporary radical wing of social psychology in the Anglo-Saxon world in Touraine's writings. In his idea of the power to control historicity I think Touraine has much the same thought as Shotter and others: that it is the power, and the right, to create social meaning that is the proper object of radical social activity. This suggests that our grasp of Touraine's sociology will be increased by an understanding of his method, which he claims is coordinate with the conception of society as social movements, and stands in an epistemic relation to these movements quite different from that of traditional sociology. Touraine claims to have invented a methodology which enables someone not only to enter the social world of a movement in a way that preserves its meaning, but also to amplify that movement itself. Sociological intervention, as he says, is to be aimed at the militants of a social movement, with the objective of raising their capacity for historical action. Thus we must cast out the old methodology, questionnaires and statistics, and adopt intervention, the action of a sociologist "whose aim is to reveal social relations and make them the main objects of analysis".

But why? Well, if it is decisions that we are finally trying to understand – and it must be, since social movements are nothing besides action – then "one must reconstruct the field of decision-making by examining the actors, and occasionally by stimulating the political process". It is no good studying the documents "secreted" by movements, since these are produced for ideological purposes. Operating from outside, so to speak, there is no way that one can reproduce the processes by which the documents were produced. Again, one recognizes a very familiar train of thought here: that leading from ethnomethodology – which presumes that the social processes by which documents are constructed can be recovered from the documents – to ethogenics, the projects of recovering the social knowledge needed to engage in such a project as managing a movement, including its documents, by considering the talk of the people involved as rhetoric.

The group involved in the movement becomes the research team itself, and this opens up the possibility of sociology as *self-analysis*. Touraine seems to think that after the intervention of the researchers the members of the group (no doubt depleted in number) can return to action with "an increasingly clear image of themselves". And in complementary fashion the researcher "will be attracted by the struggle, and even invited to join as a militant". Touraine devotes a good deal of space to some very welcome discussion of the effect on the researcher of this kind of immersion, of his moral responsiblity not only to the movement but to himself. What if a movement is morally obnoxious, destructive of human excellence? When should the intervener turn from understanding to sabotage? Touraine does not consider this possibility. Unlike many of us who have tried the same sort of thing he seems to be an optimist. After castigating the "optimism of the technocrats" he suggests in the very last lines of the book that intervention is "the same approach which lies behind the progress of those who invent the social history of tomorrow and those who seek to understand this history at the very moment of its production". But the grey bureaucracies and the brown-shirts were once those who invented the social history of that tomorrow which is now the day before yesterday. What about the interventionist sociologist then?



Degree of deprivation

By Nesta Roberts

CHARLES MADGE and PETER WILLMOTT:
Inner City Poverty in Paris and London
132pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £8.50.
0 7100 0819 8

"Where does a working man live better – in your country or ours?" Sooner or later the traveller or the temporary resident in a European country who tries to penetrate a little beneath "the lovely surface of appearances" is likely to be faced with that question. To attempt to answer it is to be plunged into a tangle of cultural differences as well as a confusion of value judgments – what exactly are we to understand by "better"? Is eating meat six days a week adequate compensation for having to cram parents and four children into two third-floor rooms? How does an annual holiday rate against "ev. mod. con."? One of the virtues of this study of what it means to be disadvantaged respectively in Paris and in London is its broad concept of poverty, which is seen as a condition of which income poverty is only one element, along with overcrowding, lack of housing amenities, poor health and limited holidays and leisure activities. Since the samples were confined to families with two or more children, so excluding the old and those with one child or none, it does not claim to present complete neighbourhood portraits, but there is no room to doubt that it shows us disadvantage in its more acute forms.

Stockwell, in the Borough of Lambeth, and Folie-Méricourt, in the 11th *arrondissement* of Paris, are sufficiently alike in their composition and in the problems they present to be comparable, sufficiently unlike to make the comparison useful to the public authorities who deal with them. Both are fairly typical inner areas, with a high proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled workers and a large immigrant population, West Indian in Stockwell, North African in Folie-Méricourt. Stockwell retains from its early nineteenth-century past as a village on the outskirts of London a number of housing features which were laid out for obviously prosperous commuters. They were more than Pooters who lived in these crescents and circuses and parks, which still provide what the authors call "oases" of comeliness among the more intensive later development. Even that has recognized the human need for air and a modicum of space, which, here and there, is green. Folie-Méricourt, wedged between Belleville and the Rue du Faubourg St-Antoine, which does not inherit fully either the revolutionary traditions nor the reputation for skilled craftsmanship of either, is an extreme example of the workers' warrens which grew up behind the broad boulevards and avenues which Haussmann drove through Paris between 1850 and 1870.

The quickest way to grasp the closeness with which buildings are packed together in central Paris, which is still one of the most densely populated cities in the world, is to mount to the rooftop terrace of La Samaritaine store and look east. The caption for the picture – an extended caption – is provided in this book's chapter on the inner city environment. A regulation of 1893 decreed that a block where more than ten people died of TB in one year was to be declared insanitary and marked for early demolition. A survey of the *Illôtsmé* in 1918 showed it to have seventeen such unhealthy blocks, housing 200,000 people. By 1953 only one of them had been demolished; in 1960 it was officially admitted that none were due for demolition and that there would be no comprehensive redevelopment programme. Since then a growing number of individual permits have been granted and, between 1970 and 1973, land values doubled, but none of the new building in Folie-Méricourt was social housing. It is at least partly because of the number of council estates in Stockwell and the total absence in Folie-Méricourt of their French equivalent, the HLM (*habitations à loyer modéré*), that overcrowding and lack of household amenities was far more acute in the latter than the former. In Stockwell, only 11 per cent of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers had more than one-and-a-half persons to a room; for Folie-Méricourt the respective percentages were 68 and 83.

Income poverty reversed the positions of the two neighbourhoods; it was nearly twice as widespread in Stockwell as in Folie-Méricourt, and was highly concentrated among families with children and, particularly, in households with an unoccupied head, who was often a lone mother bringing up her family on supplementary benefit. West Indian households, where it is customary for wives to go out to work, were no more likely than British to be suffering poverty, unlike the North African families where wives stayed at home and their husbands' earnings were low. The comparative figures on household incomes in France and Britain should demolish a number of misconceptions cherished in this country, as that we are, alternatively, crippled by taxation or sinfully cushioned by the Welfare State. The facts are that higher social security contributions in France balance higher direct taxes in Britain, also that the French derive a far higher proportion of their income from social security than do the British.

With the comparison of holidays and leisure cultural factors are more evident. Stockwell is credited with twice as much of what the study rather infelicitously calls "leisure disadvantage" as Folie-Méricourt, but some of it seems at least as likely to be due to national and individual variations as to lack of means or opportunity. Perhaps social researchers do not always realize how many people seem content to spend much of their leisure doing absolutely nothing.

Since 1973 Britain has raised its levels of family benefit and France has introduced new housing legislation, though it is not known how many new houses for workers it has as yet produced in Folie-Méricourt. The authors hope that a comparison will be made to find how far the changes have corrected the balance of social welfare between the two countries. In the meantime they remind us of the distinction between relative and absolute poverty. In both countries the latter has declined impressively since the war. In Britain, during the period 1953-78, though relative poverty, by inequality, remained unchanged, the proportion of the population judged to be in absolute poverty fell from about a fifth to about a fortieth.

The FO view and the Company view

By Ainslie Embree

M. E. YAPP:
Strategies of British India
Britain, Iran and Afghanistan, 1798-1850
682pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £40.
0 19 822481 8

"Some countries seem doomed to be always the countries of tomorrow". M. E. Yapp remarks, while for others it is "always yesterday". In this long and very satisfying work, he shows how, in the early nineteenth century, countries of yesterday and tomorrow reacted to the vibrant present, in the form of aggressive, expansionist British power. The serious study of the actual working of foreign policy and its relation to imperialism has long been out of fashion, having been replaced by the application of theories which preclude the detailed analysis of confusing, and often contradictory, evidence of the kind Yapp has used. One academic fantasy, which still echoes through the text-books, is that Britain was "anti-imperialistic" in the first half of the nineteenth century and became "imperialistic" only after 1870. Such a theory could only deal with the fact that a new empire was created between 1800 and 1850, stretching from Tenasserim to Peshawar, by ignoring it. Yapp perhaps dismisses too easily another theory when he speaks of those historians who have "a forlorn, unreasoning attachment to economic motives", but the economic realities of imperialism become plain when one moves from the grand rhetoric which sees the Industrial Revolution paid for by the raw materials of empire to Yapp's ironic picture of Lord Auckland fiddling with the accounts to conceal the true cost of the Afghan war. A third theory is what Yapp calls the idea of "imperial advantage", the argument that the defence of India, and of the routes to India, was at the heart of British foreign policy.

At this point, one is tempted to say that there is obviously no one explanation of the motives for British expansion, but a mixture of many factors; Yapp's overriding conviction, however, is that for proper historical understanding we have to know what order of priorities the actors had in the relationship between Britain and India. "Britain could have only one foreign policy", he insists, "and each element in that policy had to be embraced within a hierarchy of values". On the face of it, this seems such a tendentious – and simplistic – conclusion as to invite rejection, but Yapp's achievement is that starting from what seems a dubious axiom, he provides an original and persuasive interpretation of the dynamics of imperialism. No one familiar with the evidence is likely to agree with all his arguments; on the other hand, no one who wants to understand not only what happened in the past, but is happening now, in the great arc from Iran through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India will be able to neglect his complex and many-layered analysis.

At the heart of that analysis is the distinction Yapp makes between the policies of the British governments towards Iran and Afghanistan from 1798 to 1850 and those of British officials in India in the same period. The conventional explanation that British activities in the region were motivated by the defence of India and, specifically, by the fear of a Russian invasion from the north-west is, he insists, an interpretation imposed in order to legitimize actions that had quite other motives. As far as the government in London was concerned, its motives are to be seen in terms of its European, not its Indian interests, which were rarely central to the thoughts of the Foreign Office. In the determination of policy, India was considered only when it could serve some aspect of the Government's overall strategy, as it did in dealing with Iran in the early years of the century, or with Afghanistan in the late 1830s and again in the 1870s. "The policies of the London Government in Western Asia are explicable in terms of European interests alone", Yapp argues, "even though several foreign secretaries found financial, diplomatic, political, or military advantages in linking the presentation of their policies in the area to the needs of India."

For the British in India – those who were actually governing the territories acquired by the East India Company – the situation was wholly different. Their concern was not with the protection of the sea or land-routes to India, nor with the danger of a French invasion during the French Revolutionary wars and the Napoleonic period, nor, later, of a Russian invasion. Their chief concern was internal security; defence against the enemies who threatened their rule from within the subcontinent itself. As an early commander of the Company's armies had succinctly put it, "our enemies are as numerous as the inhabitants of the country".

The internal threat perceived by the British in India had many aspects. In the early period, roughly from 1765 to 1818, there was the danger of a coalition of Indian states outside the Company's territories which, if it did not drive the British out, would make trade unprofitable by disturbing trade routes and require a heavy expenditure on defence. Then, after 1818 there were always dangers from within British India itself: Muslim conspiracies, Brahman conspiracies, popular uprisings caused by real or fancied slights to religious customs, and, above all, mutinies in the army. "British India", Yapp summarizes, "lived in fear of an insurrection which could neither be predicted, nor understood, nor controlled." The energies and resources of the British in India (but not in London) were concentrated on this internal danger.

There was, Yapp admits, a perception of an external danger too, first from the French, and then, for much of the century, from the Russians, but even here the fear was of the effect an actual attempt at invasion or the mere belief in its possibility might have on the Indian population by fomenting hostility to British rule and encouraging conspiracies and uprisings. Muslims might be appealed to by their co-religionists in Central Asia, while the Hindu kingdom of Nepal could appeal to disaffected Hindu rulers, especially the Marathas.

The differing, and, at times, opposed interests of the London and Calcutta governments were linked, in Yapp's reading of contemporary events and policies, by vague talk of the "defence of India". This permitted each side to set its own priorities in the use of very scarce resources. While this method of defining goals made a strategy possible, it also led to confusion, to endless bickering between London and Calcutta, and, in 1842, to the disaster of the Afghan withdrawal.

A particularly valuable feature of Yapp's interpretation is his emphasis on individuals in the making and implementation of policies. In England, at the beginning of the period, great figures in the East India Company, like Charles Grant, could still play a decisive role as spokesmen for purely Indian interests, but after 1820, such concerns were almost always subordinated to wider policy issues. In India, the Governor-General gave much of his attention to defence issues (which, as Yapp sees it, were immediately related to internal security). It was the members of his secretariat, through their control of the flow of information, who were able to influence decisions and determine who the key actors were in formulating the strategy of the officials in Calcutta, and, ultimately, in London.

These actors were the Politicals – the envoys to Indian states, the heads of special missions, and the Political Agents who were sent to gather information as well as to conduct business, a central role. Their information was often of great value, though sometimes nothing more than the second-hand gossip brought them by underlings. British policy in the north-west was very largely based on it, and on the agents' recommendations. "The strategic thinking of British India was the result of the refining and harmonizing of their analyses."

Revising history in this fashion is the way historians make a living; but questions always remain regarding the validity of their revisions in relation to the available evidence, and their significance for our understanding of the time and place in question. As Yapp recognizes, he pushes his thesis too far at times, causing the rival positions to polarize and seem unrelated. He also tends to ignore the element of personal ambition, particularly, for example, Ellenborough's desire to be the creator of a great empire. Furthermore, he almost certainly rejects too easily the prospect of commercial gain as a factor in north-western strategy. Unlikely as it now seems, the old dream persisted, as a Company official had put it long before, of English goods being disposed of "in the immense territories in the north and northeast of India, where there is a great variety of climate, and inhabited by millions of people in every stage of civilization". Writing in the 1830s, Charles Trevelyan could still believe that the Indus was a great internal highway into the heart of Central Asia, which could be used for transporting British goods while at the same time checking Russian expansion. Yapp stresses the personal ambition of the Politicals, but it is hard to draw a line between this and a conviction that the necessities of state policy demanded a frontier beyond the Indus.

A random cross-section of opinions and actions suggests, however, that the evidence will, in general, validate Yapp's theses. As for historical understanding, one can trace a continuity that reaches from 1765 to 1981. "Take all prudent measures to preserve our possessions", the directors of the East India Company told their servants in India in the 1750s, when it was apparent that succession struggles might imperil their position, and fifteen years later, when the Company had become a territorial power, they were warning the Calcutta officials not to extend their possessions beyond "the ancient boundaries". But in 1765, as in the 1950s, when China was demanding new definitions and demarcations, no one in fact knew where those ancient boundaries were. The search for a defensible frontier that would permit internal security in Bengal and the other new possessions gave the East India Company what Warren Hastings called "a polity worthy of a rising state". Its inevitable outcome was the wars which pushed out the frontiers of British India.

Despite Yapp's assertion to the contrary, there seems no reason to doubt that Wellesley took seriously the danger of French revolutionary doctrines spreading in India. Napoleon's famous letter promising Tipu Sultan the assistance of a French army to free him from "the iron yoke of England" must have fed Tipu's hopes. As for the danger from the north-west, it was not unreasonable, given their scant information, to believe that Russia might encourage Zaman Shah of Afghanistan to seek a link with his fellow Muslims in Mysore. While Yapp is correct in asserting that Wellesley's conviction was that the threat to internal security would come from Indian rulers, not from a Russian or even an Afghan invasion of actual British territories, this does not mean that his plans for the defence of the north-west were not grounded in the belief that there was a genuine threat of external invasion. The important point, which Yapp does not sufficiently emphasize, is that from the very beginning, British power in India had a foreign policy which was related to its own needs, not those of Great Britain. This was what Lord Curzon had in mind when, at the beginning of the twentieth century, he claimed that one of the reasons he had been forced to resign was his insistence on "due and becoming regard to Indian authority in determining India's needs". The example he cited was the British government's renunciation of his Tibetan policy in order to serve purely British interests.

Yapp's argument that the "defence of India" strategy was a device for linking the British government's European interests with the Indian government's need for internal security has considerable contemporary relevance. It helps to explain, for example, why the present government of India responded the way it did to the Russian take-over of Afghanistan in December 1979. Powers with global interests – principally the United States and, perhaps out of historical memory, Great Britain – denounced the Russian intervention. The Indian Government, on the other hand, refrained from any direct criticism of it. This astonished many observers, whose perceptions of the politics of the region were coloured by the nineteenth-century experience. India in 1979 did not see the Soviet intrusion as a threat to its internal security, nor was she bound, as she had been in the nineteenth century, to find a link with the global interests of a great power. Furthermore, in 1979 she had the buffer state – Pakistan – for which many nineteenth-century strategists had argued between her and Afghanistan. The point of a buffer state is not primarily to prevent military invasion, but to act as insulation against involvement in the "great game", which in the 1980s, as in the nineteenth century, was not really being played in the region itself but in more distant arenas. Non-involvement, then and now, as Yapp's book makes clear, was a matter of luck as well as a measure of the skill of the actors involved.

Reconstruction business

By Lucy Mair

ANTHONY KIRK-GREENE and DOUG LAS RIMMER:
Nigeria Since 1970
A political and economic outline
161pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £3.50.
0 340 26207 9

When the Nigerian Civil War ended in 1970, the necessary reconstruction included the conclusion of the constitutional negotiations the breakdown of which had precipitated it. Nigeria's history in the decade since then has been at least as eventful as in any before it. The story is briefly told, in *Nigeria since 1970*, by a student of politics and an economist.

The crucial political event has been the introduction of the new constitution, characterized by separation of powers on the American model, by the representation of all the States in the cabinet, and by the recognition of "the federal principle" in making other key appointments. Already there are demands for the extension of the principle of "mathematical equality" and for the creation of as many as fourteen additional States. Against this trend, the formal rule that political parties must be "genuinely national" is not likely to lessen ethnic rivalry. Probably we must await the opening of archives to learn why an American-style Presidency was chosen; was it simply as a rejection of Westminster? The difficulty of living with the give-and-take of checks and balances is one reason why so many new states have adopted a one-party system, and the American type are likely to be at least as irksome and even less well foreseen. The American Constitution did not lay down that Presidents must find allies in Congress; they had to learn this by experience. Since this book went to press, Shehu Shagari is being accused of "bribery" to achieve a similar end, and Chief Awolowo complains that the electoral rules have been misinterpreted to his disadvantage. Nevertheless, the authors think that the new constitution is likely to be more durable than its predecessor.

On the economic side Nigeria is enjoying enormous windfall profits as the outcome of oil policies initiated elsewhere; these have financed a vast expansion in education but little in public health. Policy for agriculture, still the livelihood of two-thirds of the gainfully occupied, favours large-scale production and state control of marketing, although, as Rimmer points out, there is little evidence for economies of scale, and much evidence that the marketing boards fail to benefit the farmer. Irrigation schemes are being pushed ahead, although a World Bank mission has reported that production could be increased equally well by the extension of rain-fed cultivation. A Green Revolution was proclaimed in 1980, but its prerequisites were lacking. There is one extension worker for every 2,500 farmers, and the official distribution of fertilizers is so inefficient that they sometimes do not arrive until it is too late for planting. However, the massive investments that have been made in road construction should have reduced transport costs. "It is as civil engineers", Rimmer writes, "rather than economic managers, that governments in Nigeria can best promote economic productivity".

Discussing the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Rimmer refers to "the familiar Nigerian weakness that the operation of a parastatal body endowed with enormous resources and charged with vast responsibilities can strain intolerably the competence, probity and power of co-ordination of those responsible for it". Indeed, the report of a local inquiry into the NNPC referred to a "glaring absence" of qualified staff and "a managerial structure stretched far beyond the limits of efficiency". However, the (joint?) conclusion is that "The course of Nigerian development may not have been such as to satisfy every taste, but no one can dispute that the country is moving fast economically".

Return to Punjab by Prakash Tandon (211pp. University of California Press. £11. 0 520 03990 4) is "the third and last chapter of a story that began with the coming of the British to our part of the Punjab in 1852, when they fought their last battle outside the walls of our town of Gujrat." That story is both the story of the author's family, right up to 1977, and of the changes in Punjabi culture and character. *Punjabi Century* follows the family's exodus from the villages to the towns, and their gradual professionalization, in the period 1857-1947. The more autobiographical *Beyond Punjab* describes the author's career from 1937 to 1960. Educated in Britain, he returned to India to become Unilever's first indigenous chairman.

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345pp. 0 86068 177 7
Virago. £3.50 each.

Virago Modern Classics in their wisdom – which by now seems pretty widely and gratefully recognized among students of fiction – have brought out two more novels by Christina Stead, and promise one more, and a volume of stories, next year. By then, with eight of her eleven novels on their list, and some stories, and a compendious "Christina Stead Reader", they will have done what they can to restore to memory this extraordinary and so strangely neglected writer. The now well-publicized "mystery" of how we came to forget about Jean Rhys is as nothing to our overlooking of Christina Stead. She is, in the strictest and most magnificent sense, peculiar: everything about her vision and her idiom is absolutely her own.

Her admirers know that after thirty years in Europe and America Miss Stead has returned to her native Australia, where next year she will be eighty years old. One would suppose her by now to be the subject of critical analyses, theses, biographies and Sunday supplement articles. In fact, so little is known of her that there is a kind of solemn thrill in hearing her speaking *en directe*, in the Introduction to both these new volumes. And no one who admires her will be surprised to find that the two statements implicitly contradict each other. "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes", as Whitman so grandly and helpfully put it.

The Virago introduction to *The People With The Dogs* (by Judith Kegan Gardiner) quotes Miss Stead as saying in an interview in 1975, in something called *World Literature Written in English*, that she wrote this novel at a moment when "I decided, 'I can't go on criticising'". Hilary Bailey's introduction to *A Little Tea, A Little Chat* quotes her at more length: "I was brought up by a naturalist, and I *am* a naturalist. I see what I see, and if you see what you see, you understand it, That's all." This was what she said on Australian radio as recently as 1980, and she went on: "I'm not at all critical. When you're a little girl and you look in an aquarium and see fish doing this and that, and snails and so on you don't criticise and say they should be doing something else":

Valuable shards, for anyone trying to piece together some impression of her, and both quite interesting light on these new books. The two books happen to illustrate the poles of the turbulent Stead universe. *A Little Tea, A Little Chat*, first published in 1948, is dark, demonic, almost unrelievedly ugly, a rancid and claustrophobic "criticising" of capitalism, and of what it does to human emotions, demonstrated in an extreme form among American war-time profiteers. *The People With the Dogs* is an idyll, almost all light and air, a lovely variation on the stubborn American dream of achieving Arcadia. It first appeared in 1952, about five years after the writer had left America for Europe again: America recollected in tranquillity, then, and the idea that she was renouncing "criticising" when she wrote it has a valedictory suggestion. It was, indeed, another fourteen years before her next novel, but that was *Cotter's England*, in 1966, engendered by the failure of socialism in England, as well as by the evident will to paint one more monster, in Nellie Cotter, whose protestations of concern conceal her will to eat people up: the "criticising" had not yet quite ended. *The People With The Dogs* is a rare moment of truce in the turmoil of a lifetime's observing and considering.

Newcomers, anyway, are advised to begin with this radiant book, and not the febrility of *A Little Tea, A Little Chat*: or, if they do broach this, to try not to put it down, in case they have no stomach for picking it up again. Initiates will want to undergo it, because the central character, Robert Grant, is a monster to be set beside other Stead monsters – Sam, in *The Man Who Loved Children*, and Nellie in *Cotter's England* – though without their specious charm: Grant is a monster from the first, and only worsens. True, he is ageing, and aware of failing vitality – or, in Stead terms, "when he was not tired, in moments of real gaiety, with a woman who still believed in him somewhat, he could forget the foulness of his years", but "at bottom, he dreaded Astael, sign of a man who has not many years, the body's sure knowledge". His only other touching attribute is a conviction that his life-story would make a musical that "would sweep them all into the Atlantic", as he constantly says.

Most of the book is Grant's unrelenting, delirious monologue in praise of his own energies. He is a cotton millionaire, though all occasions for making money are good to him ("when the golden harvest has begun, take a scythe in your hand", he tells a colleague after Pearl Harbour). He is also an insatiable womanizer, luring new women upstairs for "a little tea, a little chat", visited by sundry sad afternoon dependants, and nightly in restaurants and night-clubs entertaining his senior female trusties, who are both more deserving and more demanding.

Sexuality suffuses much of the book, but only in cerebral or grotesque terms; the author's interest in what she calls "the love-fit" is not in its physical manifestations, but in how it affects the way people attempt to consume each other.

Grant himself always talks, rather tiresomely, of "a 'coman" and "'oomen", and of making "a forchun", presumably in the author's impatient attempts to remind us that he is allegedly British by birth, a millhand's grandson. His ravings about Europe, however, relate to no known continent. For that matter, there is nothing specifically American about the hotel rooms and borrowed apartments and offices in which Grant and associates swim. The author's own image of the aquarium holds well here: Grant is a shark, his hangers-on about as attractive as a family of Moray eels, their ill-defined New York murkily lit, flecked with morsels of detritus, food, excretion, undigested corpses. The little girl's eye only records what they say and do in her notebook, unshockably.

The innocent eye communicates with the "criticising" brain, however. Grant's quite frightening amorality is associated all the time with money, and anyone wanting to test the quality of the writer's mind could best begin at page 337, and rend in the next ten pages the astonishing apology for capitalism he makes to his elder son; particularly devious and interesting from an author whose radical sympathies have always made her very contemptuous of parlour pinks:

> Money is an art. People are going to lose the art of stained-glass windows Every idiot who last year was trying to get a job tipping over garbage cans and couldn't make it, this year, he has a safe-deposit box, and he carries it there in valises . . . Now don't listen to these boomtime men. They are carried on the wave and they say, "look how I roll and shake the beach!" But listen to me: what you see will not be there in fifty years time. Now, it's a question, can you ride every wave and not think you are the big organ saying boom-boom, or are you a man to go and sit in his orchards and say, "I'll just grow cabbages whatever happens"? . . . I know my answer – if I were twenty or twenty-five, I'd go to the Soviet Union and say, "Make me a Commissar"; I'd make a good general, and I'd make a good Commissar for Textiles, and I can grow red, blue, yellow cotton. But it's too late. So I recommend you to be a socialist, no fascist, because they have long memories and them fascists have no sense, burn up everything, produce nothing. You at least produce cabbages . . . You ought to get it into your head that you were trained in a society that doesn't exist, because no society is the same between yesterday and tomorrow. You have to live by your wits even if you inherit a million dollars . . . I can't prove it, but I feel it – keep your money, keep my money, because there isn't much money at all, and though they can look at me like a sideshow because I have a millionsome dollars, it still counts, it's money; but money that is in billions and in monopolies isn't money at all, because the people have none, and money is democratic, everyone has to have some or there's none at all. Money that's one price in a country and three prices in three countries outside, isn't currency any more. It's a sign there are earthquakes . . .'.

Capitalism rears a much more kindly and comfortable head in *The People With the Dogs*. The condition of "undefined hesitant anticipation" of its hero, Edward Massine, gentle, confused and undogmatic, is appreciably eased by his owning two apartment houses in New York, in one of which he modestly squats, as well as a family summer home in the Catskills. To the latter, the Massine tribe, all equably moneyed and talented, retire for the summer, to pass the time carelessly in what Edward calls "creative sloth". The two long central sections of the book describe this lyrical-pastoral in limpidly brilliant, loving, clear-washed detail, as in a primitive painting. The women cook, the men mend fences and play the piano, the dogs and cats pursue their nature. Judith Kegan Gardiner's introduction rightly reminds us that Edward's favourite aunt, Oneida, on whose laughter and loving bounty the rest revolve, recalls the Oneida community of "Perfectionists" founded in 1848, and still with its counterparts today; the dream to which the book submits has not yet quite died.

New York, removed from this Eden, casts a few more shadows. Edward is a war veteran – of the Second World War, it seems, since the atom bomb is mentioned as a *fait accompli* (otherwise one might not be quite sure) – acquainted with anarchists, their occupation now gone, and he himself walks in a May Day parade, though "it wasn't like the glorious and bloody May Days" pre-war. His tenants, however, make an affectionate ramshackle community as best they can, and only the Barbours are restive. Anyone doubting Christina Stead's command of comedy should read the page about them. Mrs Barbour was "an energetic professional body-snatcher. She wrote passionate biographies of the fashionable extinct, such as Henry James, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Freud, Baudelaire and Tolstoy, and dealt with popular resurrection at the rate of not less than one every year". Professor Barbour, a "well-known cerebrator", argues against Edward's possession of two houses:

> "The part is as perfect as the whole in that without it the whole cannot function There is the old story of the bum who picked a louse off his shirt and put it back, saying, That isn't the son-of-a-bitch that bit me. It is no use our saying we need not concern ourselves with Edward Massine because he seems inattentive to the extraction of profit". Edward was, because he was theirs, the most perfect expression of landlord society at that address in time and in that frontage of space they occupied. As the rest of the tenants were a distracted sort of people, unaware of what was going on about them, the Barbours declared them to be "politically illiterate" and tried to educate them in the forms of freedom. This they did by visits, by getting up petitions, and by sending round typed circulars. Mrs Barbour did the typing.

Edward in the nick of time – the penultimate chapter – finds a woman he can marry, and the family is last seen saluting them: "in this moment, as in all others, their long habit and innocent, unquestioning and strong, binding, family love, the rule of their family, made all things natural and sociable with them." This is the innocent face of Christina Stead, and one would like to know as much about it as about the fretted one. It is to be hoped that someone down in Australia has been hunting this quark in the literary firmament, and will help us to see her more plainly.

Meanwhile, two remarkable books, of diametrically opposite colour; and two very decent though inevitably insufficient Introductions. We have here a writer whose energy and magnitude escape time and place; and we ought to know more about her.

Understanding and understating

By David Profumo

A. L. BARKER:
Life Stories
319pp. Hogarth Press. £6.95.
0 7012 0538 5

When she was sixteen, A. L. Barker showed her first novel to a prospective employer, in the hope of clinching a job at his press agency. He read one chapter, and advised, "Write about what you know." Her despairing reply was, "I don't know anything." She is now older, but not, she maintains, wiser: in her latest book she writes that she has come to the conclusion "that only ignorance is viable".

Life Stories is a collection of sixteen short stories stitched together with passages of directly autobiographical prose; nine of the pieces are published here for the first time, and other material includes extracts from previous novels, and some fine selections from a notebook of descriptive passages hitherto unused. It is not surprising that she has eschewed the traditional forms of autobiography, for much of her best work has drawn strength from avoiding the artificial neatness that narrative shapeliness imposes on the representation of life: her first book, *Innocents* (1946), consisted of stories subtitled "Variations on a theme"; *The Joy-Ride and After* (1963) comprised three stories deriving from a central episode; *The Middling* (1967) is sub-titled "Chapters in the Life of Ellie Toms"; and her most recent novel, *A Heavy Feather* (1978), is compounded of nine sections concerning the life of Almayer Jenkin, though each could be considered autonomous.

Life Stories is similarly designed to avoid overstressing causility and significance. And it soon becomes clear that for Miss Barker the business of living and the business of writing are identical experiences. It is illuminating to discover, for example, how a multi-talented chemist whom she hero-worshipped as a girl appears later as Willy Lomass in *The Middling*, or how her sojourn in post-war France turns up in similar detail in parts of *The Case Examined*.

But this is only a minor function of the book's careful collage. More important is the symbiosis of fiction and life, the way in which Miss Barker's understanding of her life is largely dependent on her being able to write about it – "It wouldn't have been real to me if I couldn't get it on paper or, at any rate prepare to get it on paper." A clue to the book exists in its very title, chosen with characteristic scrupulousness. The fictional pieces she has selected are judiciously set in the context of her actual reminiscences, so as to suggest the connection, autobiographical or imaginative, which they may have with her actual past. Her baffled anxieties as a child are followed by two early stories, "Submerged" and "Here comes a candle . . . ", which explore similar emotional cruxes translated into very different fictional episodes, and her succinct analysis of her prospect of marriage leads into the story "A Considerable Speck", which details the disappointments of a young woman who has recently married.

Both in her own life and the lives she has imagined for her characters Miss Barker describes a continuous and subtle collision between people's different apprehensions of truth. This essential human dilemma finds its finest expression in "A Picture from an Exhibition", where Laura Bevis agonizes about the identity of a passionate nude in one of her recently deceased husband's paintings – is it, as she supposed, a covert signal that he knew of her infidelities, or is it a portrait of a certain Faith Delmere he used to visit? The painting retains its secret: Laura or Faith, or neither? Truth is in the eye of the beholder, and it is no coincidence that in this story Miss Barker has the nasty art-expert Tadema remind us of Ruskin's dictum that only imaginative truth is precious.

One of the most arresting autobiographical passages occurs when she describes the personalities of her parents, and there is a grimly unsentimental portrait of her disappointed father in old age staring at clumps of dead bracken amid the summer buttercups. This description is succeeded by her story "The Father", which follows the evolving fortunes of two dissimilar girls: the idealistic Rowena, who marries dull Porteous Clay, and the easy-living Pearl, who refuses to put down her roots. The story powerfully contrasts the way these two women approach Rowena's enigmatic husband and her strange child Harry, and focuses the differing ways they seek happiness.

It is difficult to characterize the variety of skills which these stories and their autobiographical analogues present. They range over the considerable spectrum of Miss Barker's accomplishments – from those early explorations of children longing to graduate to the apparently magical status of adulthood, through the original little variations on the theme of rain allied to those printed in *Novelette*, to the two chillingly dark stories with which the book ends, "Happy Event" and "The Crab". Her art is not concerned to juggle histrionically with a plot, to strive for technical developments which cause gasps of astonished admiration, but rather to work quietly and with understatement: she can make loneliness interesting, and invest suburban greyness and domestic trivia with a sense of menace or exoticism – a much more difficult feat.

A dull short story is unpardonable: it risks Antoine de Rivarol's withering judgment on a distich, "C'est bien, mais il y a des longueurs." Miss Barker is never boring, but, excellent as most of her pieces are, this is not always an easy book to read. Yet the stories of her life command attention; expertly written, they have the authority of something serious and lasting.

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Out of Liberation

By Cushing Strout

ROBERT G. O'MEALLY:
The Craft of Ralph Ellison
212pp. Harvard University Press. £8.40.
0 674 17548 4

The Carleton Miscellany
A Review of Literature and the Liberal Arts
342pp. Carlton College. Vol. XVIII, No. 3, Winter 1980. $6.

Ralph Ellison's literary career is proof that to be honoured or dishonoured has little to do with being understood. *Invisible Man* earned the National Book Award for 1952 and has often been cited as the best novel ever written by an American Negro. Yet white critics have usually bleached it in the fashionable dye of metaphysical absurdity, praising its modernist techniques while minimizing its social ideas in accord with the convention that exaggerates the difference between American romances and English social novels. Black critics of the 1950s, irritated by Ellison's break with Marxist rationalism and "social realism", accused him of "decadence" and "vicious distortion" of Negro life. A decade later, *Black World* and *Liberator*, pronouncing the West dead, promoting black nationalism, and prescribing a "black aesthetic", denounced him as a heretic.

Ellison's stubborn intellectual integrity and independence were especially tried in the 1960s when a mystique of blackness, as he put it, "made heroes out of thugs and self-servers out of dedicated leaders". It is therefore good news that we can now look to teachers of Afro-American literature, like John Wright, an editor of the final issue of *The Carleton Miscellany*, which is devoted to Ellison, and to Robert G. O'Meally, author of *The Craft of Ralph Ellison*, the first book on the entire corpus of Ellison's writing, for scholarly recognition of Ellison's authentic relation to Afro-American culture.

If Ellison himself has suffered the fate of his hero's invisibility, it is because his critics have too often been blinded by their assumption that *Invisible Man* asserts an aesthetic individualism irrelevant to the racial problem. Actually, it celebrates a future role for those migrant blacks from the South "who write no novels, histories or other books" but who, as "the bearers of something precious", might be history's "big surprise". The novel begins and ends with a white man failing to recognize a black man. "Responsibility rests upon recognition, and recognition is a form of agreement", the narrator explains. It is time for him to end his hibernation underground when he recognizes that his grandfather's advice to "agree 'em to death and destruction" was intended as an acceptance of the principles preached in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, affirming equality and diversity; for the nation's founders and heirs were "their own fools and their own destruction except as the principle lived in them and in us". In this sense the novel was prophetic of the time when the Supreme Court of the United States made racial segregation unconstitutional and paved the way for the civil rights movement.

Ellison has always known that for Americans "in the beginning was not only the word but its contradiction" – a perfect example being Jefferson's liberal ideas and his 200 slaves, who worked on the masonry and carpentry that make Monticello such an eloquent and elegant building. In a then unpublished review of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), Ellison challenged the view that Negro traits were the pathological result of white oppression. Blacks "at least helped to create themselves out of what they found around them", making a life "upon the horns of the white man's dilemma". American historians have only recently applied this premise to their treatment of slavery, but Ellison had learnt it from his own grandfather, who had once stood his ground against a mob that had lynched his friend.

The current reappraisal of Ellison by black intellectuals began in 1970 when Larry Neal refused to continue to participate in *Black World*'s campaign against Ellison. Neal anticipated Wright and O'Meally by recognizing Ellison's deep concern for Negro folk culture, his unique cultural theory which was shaped "on the basis of cultural imperatives integral to the Black man's experience in America", and his political interest in a Negro leadership aware of mass myths, symbols, and rituals. Ellison's attitude towards black chauvinists who have been troubled by his mingling of black folklore with Western symbols, myths, and literary ideas has remained uncompromising:

> I use folklore in my work not because I am Negro, but because writers like Eliot and Joyce made me conscious of the literary value of my folk inheritance.

Once a clerk for the psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan, Ellison believes that white imagery about blacks is often based on subconscious forbidden impulses; but he also knows that "the 'darky' act" of masking and playing dumb "makes brothers of us all" because the masked joker (as he learned from Constance Rourke's *American Humor*) is very much in the American grain, perhaps even "more 'Yankee' than anything else". O'Meally finds Ellison most disappointing when his emphasis on the American context seems to result in "blindly ignoring the multiplicity of cultural forms shared by peoples of African descent". But it needs to be underlined that for him "there is no American culture which exists independently of an Afro-American component". Ellison's perspective is neither assimilationist nor separatist because he sees the racial drama in America, as John Wright justly says, in terms of a "tragicomic battle-royal the painful joke of which squares off two interbred, interdependent peoples" each of whom thinks "*its* experience is the real American experience".

O'Meally points out that Ellison's interviews for the Federal Writer's Project (1938-1942) gave him first-hand experience of the Southern and African folklore persisting in Harlem in the 1940s. The folklore theme is crucial in *Invisible Man* because it is the imaginary memoir of a migrant Negro whose social character (as Ellison wrote in his essay on Harlem, unpublished until *Shadow and Act* (1964)) "arises from the impact between urban slum conditions and folk sensibilities". The description of Harlem as "the scene of the folk-Negro's death agony" and as "the setting of his transcendence" is one of the prophecies contained in the novel. His observation of a world "so fluid and shifting that often within the mind the real and the unreal merge, and the marvellous beckons from behind the same sordid reality that denies its existence" foretells the surrealistic atmosphere of Harlem as portrayed in *Invisible Man*. O'Meally is at his best in showing how blues, gospel songs, and folktales are used to provide healing nurture for the *Invisible Man*.

Invisible Man, as O'Meally says, "owes as much to the symbolist tradition of Melville and Hawthorne as it does to the vernacular tradition of Mark Twain and Hemingway". Yet if the hero sometimes sounds like a cross between Huck Finn and Ishmael, he is, in his representative status as an analogy for a historical process, like young Robin in Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux", whose similar move from country to city is a prophetic metaphor for the transformation of colonial America in the Revolution. For Ellison the "special province" of the novel is "time and social change"; and his story deals (if only by allusion) with slavery, abolition, Reconstruction, Booker T. Washington, the exodus North, Marcus Garvey's black nationalism of the 1920s, the depression, Communism, and the wartime riots of the 1940s. The hero's memoir represents the whole Afro-American experience. Those critics who see him as locked in his own private confusions miss the point, best made by John F. Callahan in *The Carleton Miscellany*, that personal and national experience are bound up with one another in many an American narrative from Melville to Twain, and that for such writers, the task is "to test and extend the possibilities of democracy".

Ellison aims to get at the "symbolic significance of what actually happened", as he put it, and his agenda connects him with and distinguishes him from the historian's truth, which he calls "another form of man trying to find himself, and to come to grips with his own complexity, but within the framework of chronology and time". The published fragments of his unfinished second novel – delayed by fire damage – illustrates his continuing concern (as O'Meally puts it) for "broad questions of identity and history, culture and politics". At any rate Volume XVIII of *The Carleton Miscellany* and *The Craft of Ralph Ellison* are the first steps towards clearer understanding of this exemplary Afro-American mind.

Tensions of twoness

By William S. McFeely

C. W. E. BIGSBY:
The Second Black Renaissance
360pp. Greenwood Press. £14.95.

Harlem, as Jervis Anderson reminded us recently in a series of vivid and perceptive articles in the *New Yorker*, has had a rich past. In recent decades the black New Yorkers' part of town has been drained of some of its vitality by overwhelming poverty and it now faces the new indignity of gentrification. To make matters worse, it is in danger of losing its proprietary claim to a great moment in American cultural history. The Harlem Renaissance, that remarkable literary, musical, and theatrical flowering of the 1920s, has been renamed the First Black Renaissance – a change that was presumably made to suggest that writers outside New York played a part in the movement.

This was certainly the case during the Second Black Renaissance of the 1960s and early 1970s, when there was no single place with which the artists could be identified. C. W. E. Bigsby's splendid book is an examination of the writing of this period, which roughly coincided with that of the Civil Rights Movement. That revolution changed the American South but, interestingly, few of these writers were still in the region and many had never lived there.

Richard Wright, the author of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, was the founding father. According to Bigsby, he "contained within himself the conflicting passions which . . . defined the nature of the black American's debate with himself and his culture". From Wright, he moves to a perceptive study of Ralph Ellison whose *Invisible Man* emerges, not surprisingly, as the strongest of all the work of these writers. Bigsby brings similar sensitivity to his reading of James Baldwin, whose best writing is superb. But this is not a work of hagiography and Bigsby points out that some of Baldwin's cries of hatred are not only paradoxical, coming from a loving man, but don't even make sense. The important autobiographical literature of the period is dealt with rather too briefly, but there are strong concluding chapters on poetry and plays.

As intellectual history, this is work of the first order. Bigsby is neither the guilt-ridden observer who would elevate any black writer into a speaker of a special kind of truth, nor a patronizing one who would subtly convey surprise that black folk can write at all. To be critical is to take seriously, and few books in the field of black cultural history can match the truly critical perspective achieved by the present work.

Noting that the writers must write in a "language scarred with guilt", Bigsby none the less asserts that "a central tradition" of their work "over the past thirty years has been essentially a liberal one." Such a tradition "implies a belief in human progress; a faith in the importance of the individual; a conviction that 'self' and 'society' are unironic terms and that the individual owes each his allegiance. It accepts the desirability of change . . ." In *Invisible Man*, for example the "hero . . . discovers his liberal principles when he stumbles into a cellar which, very significantly . . . has been closed since the nineteenth century. The boards which had been nailed around Andrew Jackson's house are coming down; the world is opening up . . . Ellison's hero prepares to leave his cellar as Thoreau had left Walden."

This optimism persists even as Bigsby recognizes that the brilliant era of his writers is past. That there will be a future is implied in his inelegant numerical labelling of the First and Second Renaissances. Surely there will be a third, and when it arrives (perhaps even in Harlem) it might bring with it a new meaning for W.E.B. DuBois's famous statement made eighty years ago: "One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." This tension between a world that desperately needed changing and individuals in search of a voice was at the centre of the work of the black writers of the 1960s. Bigsby will not accept the easy formulation that the black dilemma is merely the dilemma of all writers; the effects of racialism on black Americans cannot be generalized away that easily. Nevertheless, the tension between self and society which Bigsby sees as liberal, and that which DuBois noted in his fellow black writers, derive from the same source. As America moves more dangerously to the right then it has ever done before, and the moral majority treats "differentness" in increasingly intolerant ways, black writers, who for so long have been told they should join a dominant tradition, may instead find others joining them. Their literature has shown them to be the true inheritors of America's original protesting voice.

Rootless realists

By Lachlan Mackinnon

ANDREW GURR:
Writers in Exile
The Identity of Home in Modern Literature
160pp Brighton: Harvester £15.95.
0 391 02310 1

Andrew Gurr confines the word "exile" to those writers who leave a small, usually colonial or post-colonial, society to go to the metropolis. He distinguishes them from the "expatriates" – Eliot, Auden, Fitzgerald and, puzzlingly, Elizabeth Bishop – who move from one metropolis to another. The expatriate tends to be a poet, for metropolitan culture has turned to lyric poetry in its solipsistic, individualistic quest for self-definition, where the exile tends to write realistic prose fiction.

Gurr's central examples are Katherine Mansfield, V. S. Naipaul and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to each of whom he devotes a chapter. What most concerns him is the way in which each, exposed to the metropolis, re-creates the past in order to grasp himself or herself as a product of history. Unlike the metropolitan, the exile can look at home with the clarity of distance: however, he will deal with it in prose because he cannot rely on his new audience's sharing his prior knowledge. The work on which Gurr writes best is Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, which appears as the classic instance of his theme. The writing of *Biswas* releases Naipaul into the rootlessness of modernity, while declaring his provenance. Where Katherine Mansfield died and Ngugi deliberately re-Africanized himself, jettisoning the Christian name with which an alien history had burdened him, Naipaul became the suspicious observer of *The Overcrowded Barracoon*.

The ancestor of the exiles is James Joyce: among his putative progeny Gurr places not only the major examples but also Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing and Patrick White, among others. All must pursue the detachment of tone which saves them from nostalgia or self-pity. The densely factual quality of Bloomsday, it is implicity argued, is the necessary self-discipline for these voluntary émigrés.

Gurr's book is incisive and trenchant, covering much ground in a small space, although the detailed sections run the risk of offering summary rather than analysis. However, there are serious difficulties with which he does not contend. His writers are at least as much unlike one another as like. All that they share is that they or their ancestors were once subject to the British Empire, and that they examine their respective pasts from a foreign viewpoint. It is clear that colonialism wrecked their nations' true past and that, as Ngugi has argued, they must make a new history for themselves rather than retreating into sentimentality, but how a New Zealand woman, a Caribbean Asian and an African are to do this depends so much on local circumstance that is it hard to see how they constitute a class. There is a danger of patronizing colonial writers by treating them as having their most significant relationships with the colonizing power, and because of the perspective he has chosen, Andrew Gurr is unable adequately to set them in a context whose terms are not defined by London. They become a powerful counter-current to English literature, but this is, to Ngugi at least, quite irrelevant. To argue, as Gurr does, that their writing is less solipsistic and more attuned to historical determinants than that of metropolitan culture may well be true, though the terms used here are too simple; but there is a pervasive sense that the writers discussed are being used as implements for a liberal self-flagellation which is finally unfair both to its victim and to the object of his bad conscience.

The African Experience in Literature and Ideology (216pp. Heinemann Educational. £5.95. 0 435 916319), is a selection of papers and essays by Abiola Irele, Professor of French at the University of Ibadan. In Part One Professor Irele examines the critical positions involved in the study and criticism of literature from Africa, and in the question of language. In Part Two, under the chapter headings "What is Négritude?", "Négritude and African Personality" and "Pan-Africanism and African Nationalism", Négritude (the literary and ideological movement of French-speaking black intellectuals), is discussed in relation to literature both from Africa and from the Caribbean. The third section consists of individual literary studies: a chapter on the poetry of Aimé Césaire and that of his compatriots René Maran and Frantz Fanon, a chapter on French-African narrative and a chapter headed "Faith and Exile" in which Cheikh Hamidou Kane's only novel, *L'Aventure ambiguë*, is shown to have brought a "high seriousness" to a problem central to contemporary African writing, namely that of cultural conflict.